

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice:

Giving access for Birth, Death and Marriage certificates to people in homelands

What is your Department's approach to making a basic service for Birth, Death and Marriage certificates available to homelands people, and would it be possible to have a department person go to homelands once a year to make an opportunity for people to make applications?

The Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) has offices in Darwin and Alice Springs, with Katherine and Tennant Creek Court Houses also acting as agents.

With the recent re-introduction of the Banned Drinker Register, the Government announced a 6 month free period to access their birth certificates. I have encouraged, and will continue to encourage, Territorians to take up this opportunity.

Staff at BDM are available to assist. Applications can be made online at: www.bdm.nt.gov.au.

Territorians from remote communities are encouraged to phone BDM to finalise their applications so a staff member can better assist with their application. This also provides the ability to ensure correct spelling of names and rectifying errors that may be in the system.

The BDM is also available to assist applicants in remote communities access their life event certificates by working closely with the community to make the process as easy as possible.

This assistance includes:

1. Pre-Checking the birth name and providing that information to the Community Liaison Officer, Centrelink, Councils or other persons.
2. Advising when a change of name document is required.
3. Assisting with the completion of the forms.

4. Processing the application as soon as possible.
5. Waiving the need to advertise in the newspaper for the next six months.
6. Waiving the postage costs for the next six months.
7. Accepting facsimile copies and email requests (with originals to be posted later).

BDM believes that these measures have been effective in providing assistance to remote Territorians.

Increased access to justice services is the subject of consultation for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement. The Department of Attorney-General and Justice has created a specialist Aboriginal Justice Unit to deliver the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

As you would be aware, delivery of justice services to remote areas is expensive. However, that does not mean that improvements should not be sought or made. There is presently no capacity to directly service remote communities in person within BDM's existing resource allocation. I am hopeful that the delivery of better justice services, including in relation to the BDM, will be at the forefront of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.