

## Online Birth Registration

**Published On:** 07 September 2015

**Organisation:** Department of Internal Affairs

**Country:** New Zealand

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** General public services

**Type:** Digital, Public Service

**Launched in:** 2015

**Overall development time:** 6 month(s)

**Link to the innovation's website**

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# Description

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Each year approximately 60,000 babies are born in New Zealand. The Birth Registration Online service is a first step towards creating a digital environment in which customers, staff and government agencies can work to provide a seamless service for customers. It removes traditional barriers people face when interacting with government, including lengthy forms, multiple processes and reliance on the postal service. The online form also includes the ability to apply for an IRD number for baby by a simple tick box. Benefits include:

- Easier for parents to notify birth for registration and order an associated birth certificate without the need to complete a hardcopy form
  - Faster notification
  - Online confirmation that notification has been received
  - More accurate and timely notification of births
  - Less maintenance, printing and distribution of hardcopy forms
  - Withdrawing the paper forms out of hospitals without negatively affecting birth registration compliance.
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## Why the innovation was developed

- The service contributes to the all-of-government transformation objective to ensure that New Zealanders can complete their transactions with government easily in a digital environment.
  - The birth registration process was paper-based and high on effort for parents, hospital staff, midwives and others. The lengthy form was distributed to new mothers by their midwife after delivery with a myriad of other paper information, and required a high degree of effort to complete at a time when they need to be focusing on other things.
  - The online form gives parents an easier option to register their baby, obtain a birth certificate and apply for an IRD number on their laptop or smart phone after birth when the timing is right for them.
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## Objectives

Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- Create an online channel suiting new parents.
  - Introduce a simple, quick and accessible way for parents to register the birth of their child, order a birth certificate and apply for an IRD number easily and together.
  - Reduce the compliance effort for customers at a critical time in their lives while maintaining and/or increasing birth registration compliance.
  - Reduce the department's effort to register births by eliminating data entry from paper forms.
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## Main beneficiaries

Families, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- The innovation primarily benefits around 120,000 new parents of 60,000 babies born in New Zealand each year.
- Public servants

# Results

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## Efficiency

- Parents take less time to complete the online form than previously and no longer have to mail their paperwork.
  - More accurate data is recorded as the parent is typing their details.
  - Less rework post registration as the customer is keying the data – less transcription and fewer interpretation errors.
  - Less paper handling (printing, distribution, wastage, storage, version control).
  - Fewer reminder letters sent because parents are sending birth information earlier and there is no postal delay.
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## Effectiveness

- The online channel immediately achieved a 70% uptake and has consistently remained at that level since going live in March 2015.
  - As a result there has been significant decrease in the number of paper forms that need to be made available and processed.
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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

- Parents can access online service anywhere at any time.
- Online form accessible by tablets and smart phones.
- The Department receives the registration faster so the information is available earlier to share with other agencies.

### Responsiveness:

- Customers benefit as the birth certificate is issued faster.

### Reliability:

- Changes to the form are immediately available online to new parents rather than old paper forms which can stay in circulation for many months.
  - Secure online credit card payments. Less handling and processing of cheques, money orders and cash for birth certificate orders.
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## Other improvements

- Better public services.
- Government agencies are working together and with communities to come up with innovative ways to deliver better public services.
- Helping New Zealanders complete their transactions with government easily in a digital environment.
- The online channel immediately achieved a 70% uptake and has consistently remained at that level since going live in March 2015.

# Development

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## Design

The idea was generated by the Registrar-General after a visit to the New South Wales registry office in Australia early in 2014. The NSW Registry was developing an online process that still relied on a hardcopy form to be signed and mailed. Our department investigated whether it would be possible to develop processes to enable a fully online process. The innovation involved front-line staff, policy and legal staff, consulting with users, and engaging with key stakeholders such as hospitals, midwives, and District Health Boards.

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## Testing

- The development of the new processes and forms was managed and vigorously tested in-house.
  - The service was also tested in advance by a limited number of parents.
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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Project management methodology.
- Solution Delivery Life Cycle methodology.

### Resources used:

- Total cost: \$240,000.
  - Project team included: a Project Manager, Front-line subject matter experts, a small testing team, Wider business representatives, and a communications adviser.
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## Diffusion

- Giving birth, and the requirements of acting on behalf of a new baby, involve dealing separately with different multiple government and non-government service providers (such as midwives and Plunket).
  - The Birth Registration Online innovation is a first step towards creating a digital environment in which customers, staff and government agencies can work to provide a seamless services for customers.
  - The service has informed the department's current design work for the 'birth of a child' life event on making it easier for new parents to engage with government and access government-funded services and entitlements across the board.
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## Challenges and solutions

- The biggest challenge in introducing the new form was the management of change and people.
- The previous paper-based process had been in place for many years and the presence of paper gave key stakeholders and staff a certain confidence in the robustness of that process.
- Significant effort was focused on communicating the new registration process and the continuation of robust identity verification processes in the absence of a paper and a hand-written signature.
- The solution had a number of facets including: careful thought on the wording of the online form, development of 'question and answer' topics and scenarios for key stakeholders and staff, clear and regular communications throughout development and additional 'behind these scenes' checks after implementation so people could be assured of the continued integrity of the process.

# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- Subject matter experts were involved across all technology and business activities, and made available at all times to ensure rapid progress could be made.
  - The breadth of experience of resources in the project team meant the team was able to work efficiently with relevant knowledge in the team.
  - Regular and concise communications to key stakeholders and staff ensured that all questions and concerns could be answered prior to implementation.
  - The project initiation process could have been more rigorous to ensure the engagement of the right resources from the outset and the alignment of business and technology requirements.
  - Existing legacy IT systems had minimal documentation and this resulted in time lost documenting those systems.
  - The lack of data definitions resulted in unanticipated defects being identified during testing and more time spent clarifying the issues before they could be remedied.
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## Conditions for success

- Early and regular engagement with customers and key stakeholders.
  - A robust problem definition, agreed intervention and a well-defined scope to ensure the project keeps on track.
  - An understanding of the business change required to enable the innovation and a flexible approach to software development to determine quickly if those business requirements can be met.
  - Ensuring members of the project team are kept well informed during the project lifecycle and are clear about the business objectives.
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## Other information

The Birth Registration Online project team was able to deliver an online Birth Registration form for new Parents successfully on 23 March 2015.

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