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MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 8 October 2019

BIRTH CERTIFICATES CHANGING LIVES

Nearly 1,000 people from vulnerable and Indigenous communities have benefited from free birth certificates in 2018-19, helping them to access potentially life changing services.

Attorney General Mark Speakman and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Don Harwin have revealed the number of free birth certificates provided by the NSW Registry of Births Deaths & Marriages (BDM) has increased more than ten-fold over the last two years from 80 to 953.

“Without a birth certificate, obtaining a drivers licence, establishing a bank account or accessing emergency accommodation is difficult, if not impossible,” Mr Speakman said.

“BDM has dramatically increased the number of free birth certificates it provides to some of the most vulnerable people in our community – empowering them to have greater access and opportunity.”

Mr Harwin said the increased, meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities on their land is building stronger ties.

“The *Our Kids Count* program is achieving magnificent results as the BDM outreach team connects with Aboriginal parents in the regions, encouraging them to register the births of their babies and obtain birth certificates,” Mr Harwin said.

BDM Community Engagement Manager Annette Finneran said the program would continue to grow with future visits planned across NSW.

“It’s so rewarding to be taking our services to more regional, rural and remote communities and helping to make a difference to the lives of fellow Indigenous people,” Ms Finneran said.

CEO of Birpai Local Aboriginal Land Council in Port Macquarie David Carroll said: “the *Our Kids Count* visits have been embraced by Aboriginal communities because they are delivering a vital service in a relaxed and friendly environment.”

NSW Government reforms rolled out in April 2018 allow all birth registrations to be completed online at the Births Deaths & Marriages website: www.bdm.nsw.gov.au and more than 95 per cent of all registrations are now completed online.