

OIA-CE-2025-02934

4 June 2025

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe korua

Thank you for your email, received on 19 May 2025, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information on the removal of an appropriation measure from the 2023/24 Annual Report. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I have responded to each part of your request below.

1. *The section within the correct Act which gave effect to legalising open adoption in New Zealand as stated in the quoted text (above), ‘when open adoptions were legalised’.*

As listed below, Oranga Tamariki identified several reasons for removal of this as an appropriation measure in a 2023 review of appropriation measures. This included a reduction in request volumes due to changes in adoption practices over time.

However, I note that it is incorrect to state that these changes in practice amount to legalisation of open adoption. Thank you for identifying this mistake in our 2023/24 Annual Report.

2. *Any other justifications given for the removal of ‘The number of requests from adults seeking identifying information on birth parents...’ from Oranga Tamariki’s 2023/2024 Annual Report.*

This measure was removed for several reasons.

Firstly, the removal of the measure reflects the reduction in adopted adults seeking identifying information. Over time, as adopted adults have used the information provisions of the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985, there are fewer people who need to use the section 9 entitlement. As more and more adoptions, particularly from the mid-1980s onwards, included a measure of openness, there has also been a reduction in need for people to formally apply for information that is already known to them.

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It was also determined that legislative reform of the Adoption Act would be the right opportunity to review and identify new measures for adoption services.

In addition, the number of appropriation measures (and associated cost burden) was reduced in order to be more proportional to the funding for this appropriation category, as the collection of this data was manual and was sourced from Oranga Tamariki and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA).

We also determined that the existing measures A1.1 (in the 2023/24 Annual Report) and A1.2 (in the 2022/23 Annual Report) provided sufficient accountability to the Crown for the Vote expenditure with a clear focus on service delivery.

Finally, the measure is not influenced by Oranga Tamariki and is not an effective measurement of Oranga Tamariki performance against the appropriation category.

- 3. The evidence to show that the removal of the data set referenced in the above quote was approved and signed off by the group within Oranga Tamariki administering the Adult Adoption Information Act.*

The 2023 review of appropriation measures included consultation within Oranga Tamariki, including with the Deputy Chief Executive responsible for adoption services.

One document has been identified as being in scope of your request:

- Governance Paper GP-23-147 – Seeking Te Riu feedback on proposed changes to 2023/24 appropriation measures

This document is attached as Appendix One. Please note that some information concerning other appropriation measures has been withheld as it is outside of the scope of your request.

- 4. A list or description of the “improvements in resources available” referred to in the 2023/2024 Annual Report quote above.*

The Oranga Tamariki Adoption Service provides a range of services to adult parties to past adoptions under the Adult Adoption Information Act and the Privacy and Official Information Acts. During this period, Oranga Tamariki developed an additional option to support adopted people whose birth father is not named on their original Birth Certificate but is named on our records. Under some circumstances, the Adoption Service may be able to trace and approach a birth father to ascertain his view about the sharing of his name and details with the adopted person. You can find more information about this on the Oranga Tamariki website [here](#).

We also developed an updated resource to support adopted people when they are searching for their birth parents. You can find this document attached as Appendix Two.

In addition, we developed some specific guidelines for people seeking information about their adoption from Court adoption records. This also applies when a family member is seeking information from the Court about an unknown family member. You can find these guidelines [here](#).

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5. *The actual number of requests from adults seeking identifying information on birth parents in the 2023/2024 year.*

In the year ending June 2024, the Adoption Service received 93 applications from adopted adults for identifying information about their birth parents.

6. *A list of the data sets published or unpublished, collated by Oranga Tamariki relating to the Adult Adoption Information Act.*

Oranga Tamariki recognises that there is public interest in the volumes of the services that are provided under the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 and the Privacy and Official Information Acts to parties to past adoptions. The following table outlines the services provided and the respective volumes of enquiries and applications for the last four years.

Adult Adoption Information Services	Financial year			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total adult adoption enquiries received	896	811	796	884
Original birth certificates issued	176	140	123	122
Section 8 applications from birth parents for identifying information about their son or daughter	72	32	32	21
Section 8 applications completed by sites	51	32	29	16
Section 9 applications from adopted adults for identifying information about birth parents	177	149	118	93
Privacy Act / Official Information Act releases from adoption records	228	244	248	209
Additional mandatory searches completed	43	40	66	22
Results of birth father approaches reported to adopted person	-	-	26	11
Social work reports completed on Section 23 applications for access to court adoption records	74	72	94	80

Oranga Tamariki may make the information contained in this letter available to the public by publishing this on our website with your personal details removed.

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I trust you find this information useful. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them with Oranga Tamariki. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Allington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Allington
**General Manager Strategy Insights and Performance
System Leadership**



Governance Paper

Paper number: GP-23-147

To: Te Riu
DCE Sponsor: Phil Grady, DCE System Leadership

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and curves.

Signature

Approval for submission: Phil Grady, DCE System Leadership
Paper author: Sarah Su, Manager Performance Hub
Shannon Mackiewicz, Senior Analyst Performance Hub
Date prepared: 15 November 2023
Security level: In-Confidence

Seeking Te Riu feedback on proposed changes to 2023/24 appropriation measures

Purpose

1. This paper seeks feedback from Te Riu on proposed changes to the Ministry's 2023/24 appropriation measures before they are finalised and submitted to the Minister for approval. The proposed changes are to remove 6 measures; amend 11 measures; and keep 19 measures unchanged.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that you:
 - a) **provide feedback** on the proposed changes to the appropriation measures (Appendix A), which were developed in consultation with business groups.
 - b) **note** the Treasury and Audit NZ were consulted and support the proposed changes.
 - c) **note** the Performance Hub team will work with business groups to incorporate any further feedback before reporting back to Te Riu for final approval in February 2024.
 - d) **note** feedback was sought from the Risk and Assurance Committee at their meeting on 30 November 2023 and we will provide a verbal update to Te Riu on this feedback

Oranga Tamariki use appropriation measures to help articulate its performance in accountability reporting

3. The Ministry is funded to invest in and deliver a range of services through appropriations within Vote Oranga Tamariki¹. Performance measures and agreed standards against these appropriations are published in the Annual Estimates of Appropriations on Budget Day – these measures may be amended through the supplementary estimates process undertaken in April each year.
4. The Ministry reports year-end results against agreed standards in our Annual Report, as required under the Public Finance Act 1989. In the Oranga Tamariki 2022/23 Annual Report, we achieved 26 of our 36 measures (72 percent) compared to 24 of our 38 measures (63 percent) in 2021/22.
5. Historically, we have relied on appropriation measures to describe our performance. In the 2022/23 Annual Report, we introduced new impact measures to provide a more comprehensive picture of our performance – the Treasury and Audit NZ provided positive feedback on these.
6. The Ministry has reported mostly the same appropriation measures for the past five years, with a few exceptions where specific projects or work programmes have progressed. When we submitted the 2022/23 Annual Report to the Minister in October, we indicated that we would amend some measures through the supplementary estimates process for our 2023/24 Annual Report.

We consulted extensively to review our appropriation measures and have proposed changes for Te Riu to consider

7. This is the first year the Performance Hub team has led a review of the appropriation measures, and we are establishing a process to do this annually with the Strategic Finance team. We have worked with tier three measure owners and subject matter experts on the proposed changes in Appendix A.
8. We consulted the following teams on appropriation measure changes:

Service Delivery

- Intercountry and Domestic Adoption Services
- Business Operations
- Operational Performance
- Transition Support Services
- Youth Justice Services Support

Quality Practice and Experiences

- Quality Systems and Analysis
- Quality
- Safety of Children in Care (SOCIC)
- Reviews and Recommendations

Office of the Chief Executive

CPMO – Crown Secretariat

Māori, Partnerships and Communities

- Office of the DCE
- Voices of Children and Young People
- National Operations
- Regional Operations
- Quality

System Leadership

- Life Course and System Analytics
- Analytics and Insights
- Crown Response Unit
- Policy

People, Culture and Enabling Services

- Strategic Finance

9. We understand DCEs have individually reviewed the measures for which they are responsible, but Te Riu haven't had the opportunity to collectively review the suite of proposed changes.
10. We have sought feedback from the Risk and Assurance Committee at their meeting on 30 November 2023 and will verbally update Te Riu on this feedback. We also engaged the Treasury and Audit NZ throughout our measures review process and their feedback is outlined below.

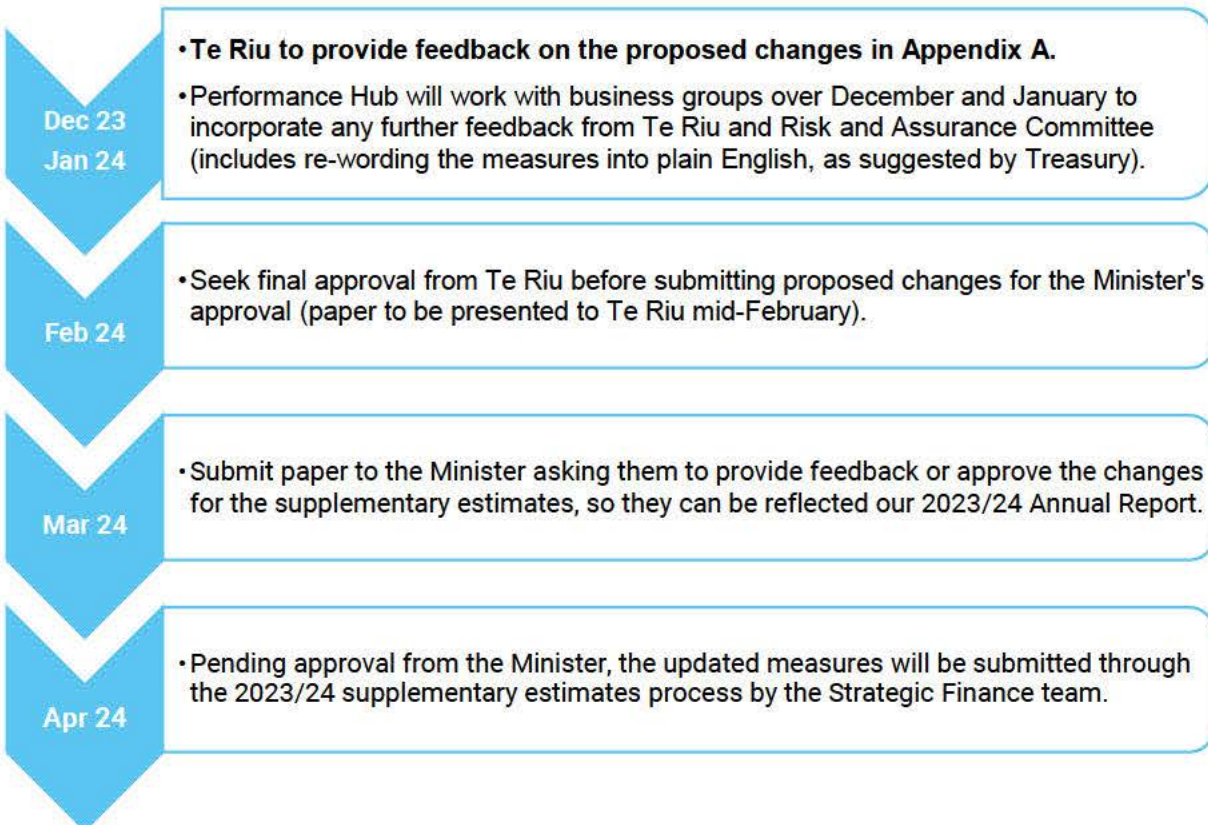
This review has addressed previous feedback from the Treasury and Audit NZ, but there is opportunity for further improvements

¹ Vote Oranga Tamariki Estimates 2023/24 <https://budget.govt.nz/budget/pdfs/estimates/v9/est23-v9-oratam.pdf>

11. Treasury and Audit NZ suggested improvements to our measures in previous years, for example, to replace measures where we “report on” progress (with no specific standard). They are comfortable with the proposed changes and are satisfied their previous feedback has been addressed.
12. Treasury’s main feedback on our proposed changes was to re-word the measures so they are easier for the public to understand and framed in the positive. They suggested attaching explanatory notes rather than trying to capture too many technical details in the measure. We will work with business groups on suggested re-wording, with the intent of the measures remaining the same.
13. Treasury also suggested we should be more aspirational with our targets. We indicated this was already discussed with business groups, and what has been proposed was considered a balance between aspirational and realistic given current projections particularly in the youth justice space.
14. Audit NZ are comfortable with the proposed changes and are keen to support ongoing improvements to our measures. They gave specific feedback on the need to enhance our contracting measures and indicated this will be a key area of interest for audit over the next 1-2 years. We will continue working with Māori, Partnerships and Communities teams to improve these measures throughout the year.

We recommend updating our 2023/24 appropriation measures through the supplementary estimates process in April 2024

15. The immediate next step is for Te Riu to provide feedback on the proposed measure changes attached in Appendix A. This will allow enough time for the Performance Hub team to work with business groups to refine the measures before they’re submitted back to Te Riu for final approval.
16. The timeline and process for finalising the measures are outlined below.



Appendix A – Proposed changes to 2023/24 appropriation measures

Appropriation measures to remove (6 measures)

Ref.	Responsible DCE	Appropriation measure	2020/21 Result	2021/22 Result	2022/23 Result	Rationale for removing measure
AS01	Rachel Leota	The number of requests from adults seeking identifying information on birth parents will be between 150-250	189	143	118	<p>This measure is driven by requests for information when open adoptions were legalised. A reduction in adopted adults seeking identifying information is not necessarily negative – this reflects changes in adoption practices and improvements in resources available.</p> <p>We want to rationalise our measures and given proportionality of funding for this appropriation category (\$10m), our preference is to remove this and keep the more meaningful measure below (ref. AS02, refer page 7) for Adoption Services.</p>

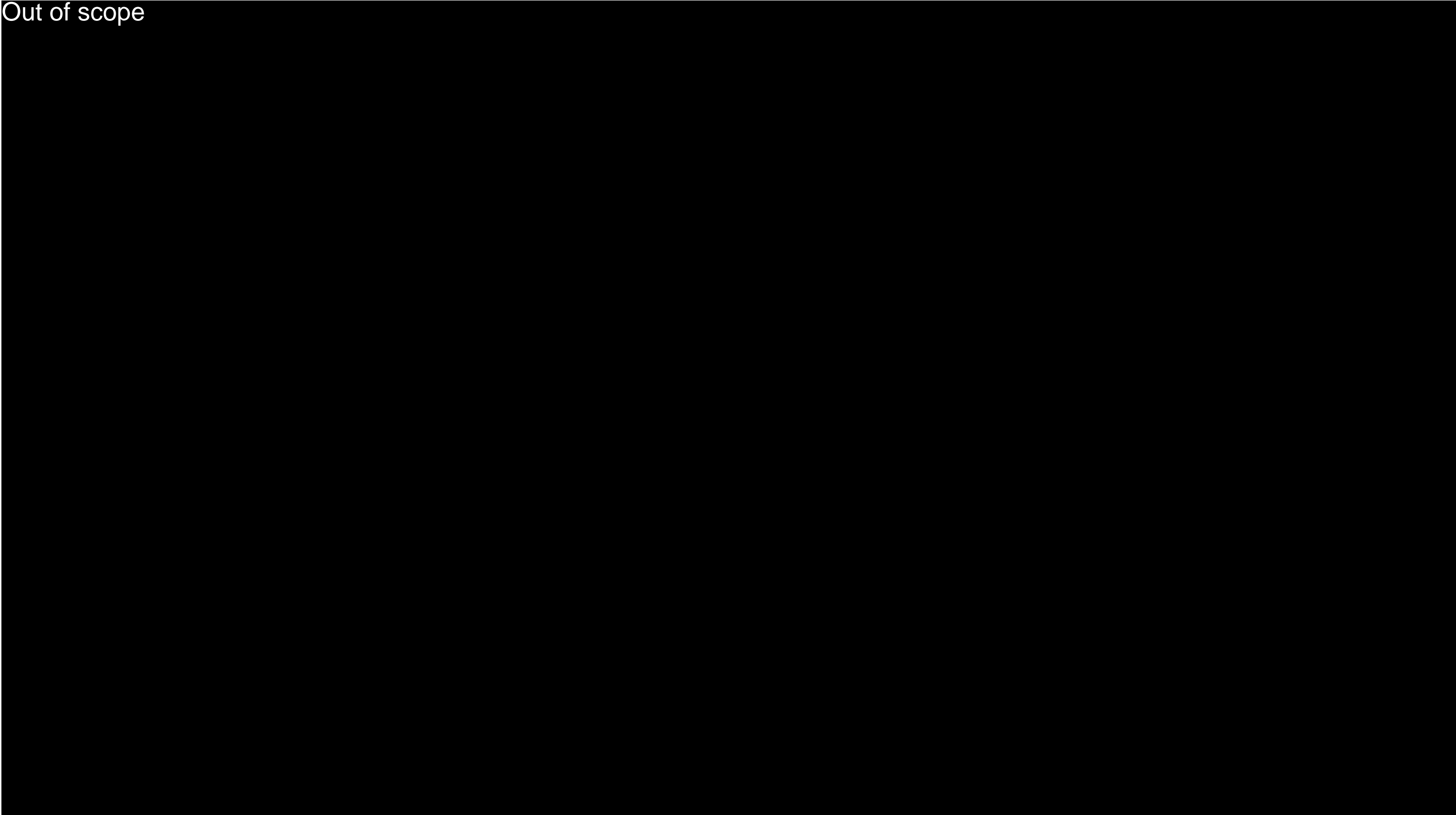
Out of scope

² Refers to External Reporting Board's (XRB) Public benefit entity financial reporting standard 48 Service performance reporting [PBE FRS 48 Jan22 \(xrb.govt.nz\)](https://www.xrb.govt.nz/pbe-frs-48-jan22). Under the Public Finance Act 1989, all agencies have external reporting obligations that must apply XRB standards.

Out of scope



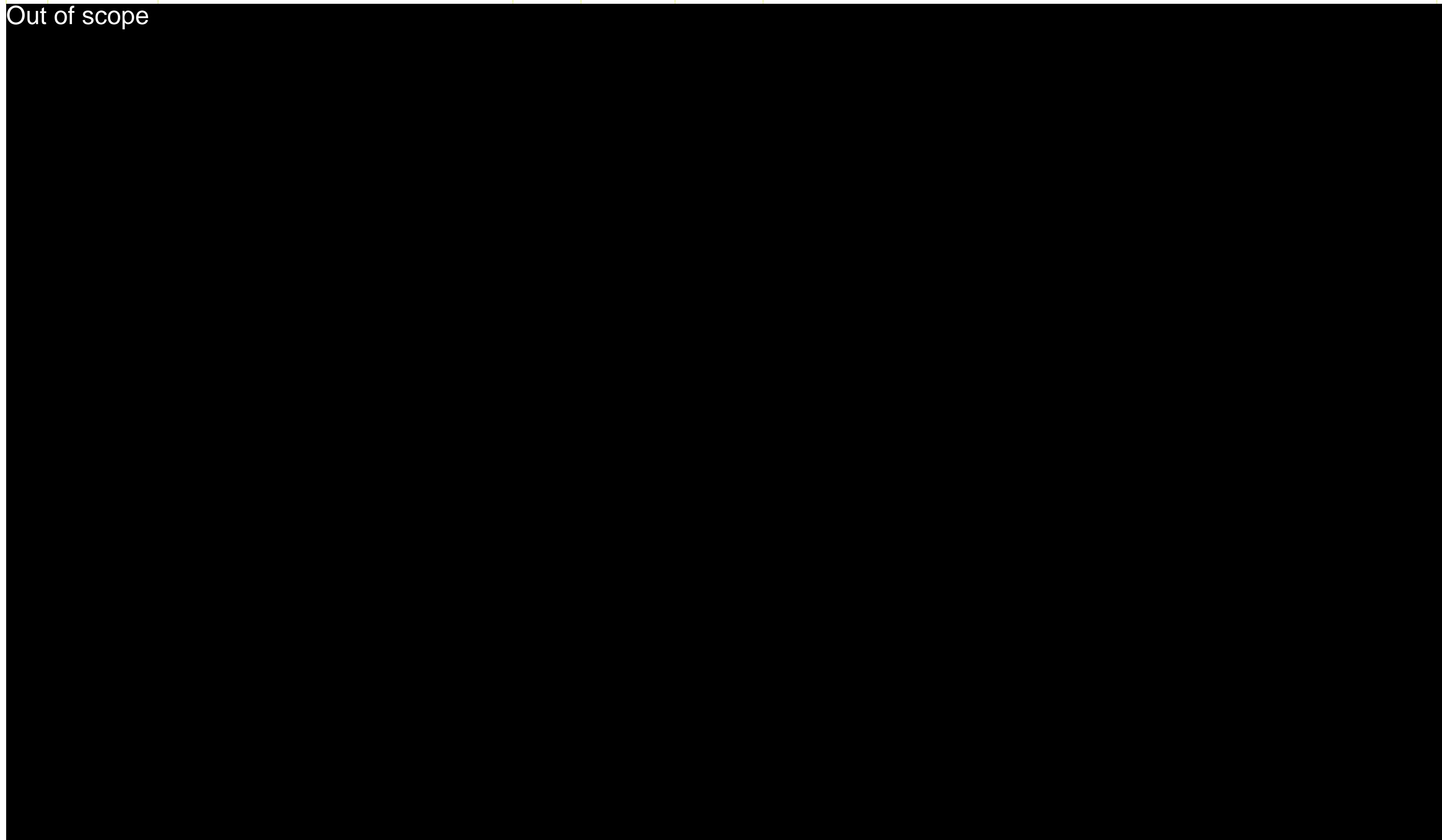
Out of scope



Appropriation measures to keep unchanged (19 measures)

Ref.	Responsible DCE	Appropriation measure	2020/21 Result	2021/22 Result	2022/23 Result	Rationale for keeping measure
AS02	Rachel Leota	The percentage of assessments of suitability to adopt that are completed within 3 months will be no less than 90%	94%	98%	98%	This measure is still relevant to the Adoption Services appropriation and demonstrates how efficiently we handle adoption assessments to ensure the process quick, while still being thorough. This is important as awaiting the outcome of an assessment can cause stress and uncertainty for people. Oranga Tamariki can minimise this stress by operating in a timely way.

Out of scope



Out of scope



How you can search for your birth parents

Once you have been provided with your pre-adoptive birth certificate, you will have the name(s) of your birth parent(s) that were registered at the time of your birth. Your pre-adoptive birth certificate will also include the age and place of birth for any birth parent recorded at the time that your birth was registered.

Birth parents can be located through public records and this guide outlines some initial steps you can take to search for them. Locating current contact details for your birth parent should be your first priority, rather than any wider family members. This means you can then decide whether and how to make an approach to your birth parent. While sometimes searches for extended family members may help to locate current details for your birth parent, it is always important to consider the privacy of the people involved.

1. Information known

The information on your pre-adoptive birth certificate is what was recorded on your first birth registration when you were born. Further searching is generally required to locate current contact details for a birth parent who is likely to have married and could be using different names, spellings, or versions of their names.

You may also have additional information from the Ministry's adoption record, such as usual home address, occupation, and other details about the family. This can sometimes be useful background information to help identify or confirm current contact details when searching.

2. Access to public records

Public records provide information that will help you establish whether your birth mother married and what her current married name might be. Public libraries throughout New Zealand hold various public records and staff there can often provide helpful advice on completing marriage searches. Libraries also have access to helpful websites such as [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [MyHeritage](https://www.myheritage.com).

How do I find out if my birthmother married?

Most larger public libraries hold New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriages indexes on microfiche. These indexes are lists of the people who were born, married, or died, arranged alphabetically by surname for each year. The index provides a name and a folio reference number. These registrations can help you establish or confirm the correct birth name, age, married name, and/or date of death for the person you are looking for. This information will enable the Registrar General's office to identify the entry if requested.



There are often library staff with specialised knowledge who can support you to undertake searches of the marriage index on microfiche. You would generally begin a microfiche check from the year that you were born. These indexes are available on microfiche up until 1990. Index searches from 1991 to current day will need to be carried out by Births, Deaths and Marriages at the Department of Internal Affairs.

Accessing a Birth, Death, or Marriage Registration

Births, deaths, and marriages are registered at a district register office and a copy is sent to the Registrar General's Office in Wellington on a quarterly basis. The details of a birth, death, or marriage registration can be requested through your local registry office or through the Registrar General's office.

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Contact Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 5:30pm. They can be contacted at bdm.nz@dia.govt.nz, PO Box 10526, Wellington 6140, 0800 22 52 52 (New Zealand only), or +64 9 339 0852. Detailed information about fees can be found at www.dia.govt.nz. You can pay for most searches, print outs, and certificates by credit card.

A marriage registration will generally include the following details for the bride and groom:

- Name
- Age
- Occupation
- Relationship status (eg. never married or previously married)
- Place of birth
- Address
- Father's name and occupation
- Mother's name and maiden surname



Searching electoral rolls

A search of electoral rolls held at local libraries using a current name and/or partner's name may locate a current address for the person you are looking for. Rolls are published by electorate, including seven Māori electorates. Enrolled voters are listed alphabetically by surname. Their full name, physical address, and occupation are listed. Electoral rolls are updated around the time of each national election.

Libraries also hold historical electoral rolls and these can be useful to search as they can indicate the previous whereabouts of the person you are searching for. Rolls will also record the details for other family members registered at the same address, which can provide useful background information to support your search, especially where a surname is more common. New Zealand electoral rolls up to 1981 can also be searched on Ancestry.com.

If you are unable to locate current contact details from a marriage microfiche and electoral roll search, you can:

- Request a search of marriage entries at Birth, Deaths and Marriages
If you are not requesting a particular entry that you have identified, you will need to specify searches by year and make the associated payment.
The date and place for any divorce that has occurred is most easily established by getting a copy of the marriage registration. Where a divorce is stamped on the entry, a new marriage search from the date of the divorce can then be completed.

- Complete a death registration search

If the person you are looking for is not located in a marriage or electoral roll search, you are able to complete a search of the death registrations held on microfiche at public libraries. These are an indexed list of deaths registered by year, from 1921 to 1990. Copies or printouts of a death registration can be purchased from Births, Deaths and Marriages.

3. Additional sources of information

Depending on what you are able to establish, further searching steps include:

- Requesting your birth parent's birth entry for any name change recorded.
- Newspaper death notices will often include relevant information about current family members of a person who has died. There are various ways that death notices can be accessed. Local libraries may hold recent papers. You can search death notices in newspapers on microfilm at public libraries. The National Library of New Zealand (58 Molesworth Street, Wellington) holds copies of most New Zealand newspapers. Enquires can be made on their website www.natlib.govt.nz or by phone 04 474 3000.
- Habitation rolls are held at the National Library. These are indexed by street name and house number, and list the people registered in the electoral roll at a specific address. These are only available from the 1980s onwards.

4. Internet searching

The internet may provide a range of information about any name searched for. Results may not be definitive and should be cross referenced with what you already know about the person you are searching for.

If you find someone by the same name on social media, check to see if you have the correct person. For example, on Facebook, look at the 'About' section, as it may include details that can help to confirm that you have identified the correct person. Facebook matches to others can help confirm a maiden name, children's names, and other family members' names.

If using social media, it is important to maintain the privacy of your birth parent by not disclosing personal information about them, or yourself, to others. Respecting your birth parent's privacy allows them to decide how to share information about you with their family.

Some useful websites include:

- Archives New Zealand for historical New Zealand searching
- Ancestry.com and MyHeritage may hold genealogical family tree matches that could provide details to assist with your search
- Google search of birth parents' parents' names, as many obituaries can be found online
- Online cemetery searches
- New Zealand Companies Register, as directors and shareholders can be searched
- New Zealand White Pages
- LinkedIn

5. Useful tips and hints

- Keep an open mind and verify as many facts as possible, especially if you find information that is contradictory.
- There are many websites for overseas searching. However, many can involve charges. The Adoption Service can access searching in Australia and some other countries through our membership of International Social Service. Please talk with your social worker if you would like to discuss this option.
- Record the searching steps that you take so that you can refer back, plan next steps, or seek more advice.

6. Requesting Oranga Tamariki to complete searching to locate a current name and address for your birth parent

The Adult Adoption Information Act entitles you to request Oranga Tamariki to complete a search to locate current contact details for any birth parent named on your pre-adoptive birth certificate.

Your request needs to be in writing and include a copy of your pre-adoptive birth certificate.

If you would like the Ministry to complete this searching, you can:

- Talk to your social worker
- Contact your local Adoption Service office
- Make an enquiry using our [online form](#)
- Call 0508 326 459 to talk to one of our adoption social workers

Your Adoption Service social worker is also happy to provide advice and support for any questions about locating your birth parent yourself.

7. Approaching a birth parent

Once you have current contact details for a birth parent, your Adoption Service social worker will be happy to talk with you about:

- the sort of approach you would like to make
- preparing for and making an approach to your birth parent

Adoption Service
Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children
Updated: May 2025

