**ACT Birth registration data**

ACT Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages

## Background

All babies born in ACT must be registered within 6 months of birth.

Under the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997*, parents must provide the Registrar with the full details of the child’s birth for a Birth Certificate to be produced. The ACT Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages (ACT RBDM) keeps a permanent record of all registered births.

## Record linkage of ACT RBDM birth data

Birth registrations held by the ACT RBDM are used by the CHeReL to facilitate high-quality linkage to the Maternal Perinatal Data Collection (MPDC) and create family linkages (see below).

ACT RBDM Birth registrations are not frequently requested for research; however birth registration data contains information about the baby and mother that may not be held in the MPDC such as Aboriginality of the father.

## Family linkage

Birth registrations held by the ACT RBDM contain full personal identifiers for the biological mother and other parent, and the child’s name. The CHeReL links ACT RBDM birth registration records to create a family ID number. Data for each individual (mother, other parent, child) can be linked to any external (with sufficient identifiers) or Master Linkage Key data collection, with the corresponding Family ID attached. It is also possible through the mother’s record to identify siblings. This gives researchers the opportunity to look at health-related outcomes (physical and mental health) in multiple members of the one family (as opposed to the traditional mother-baby linkage), and explore the relationships retrospectively and prospectively. Family linkage studies may be important in examining aetiology of risk factors or disease

## Tips / limitations for using birth registration data in linkage studies

* The ACT RBDM birth registration data are based on year of registration of the birth, rather than the year of the birth.
* Stillbirths are required by law in ACT to be registered as a birth.
* It is advisable to request an additional year of data if you require all births within a given year/time period. Approximately 90 percent of births occurring in any one year are registered in the same year, but the remaining 10 percent may not be recorded until the following year.
* ACT RBDM birth registration data are provided in raw, uncoded format. For this reason only the variables listed below are available for analysis.
* ACT RBDM birth registration data only includes births registered in ACT.
* Birth registration data represents the family structure at the time the birth was registered, which is not necessarily the family structure at the time of the birth. Not all births are registered within 6 months of the birth. Late birth registrations are accepted.
* The other parent on the ACT RBDM birth registration file is not necessarily the biological parent.
* The ability to assign family links is only as good as the available data. It is not possible to contact participants to confirm information about relationships or explain gaps in the family structure.

## Access to information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

An application to the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) ethics committee should be made for research projects for which one or more of the following apply:

* The experience of Aboriginal people is an explicit focus of all or part of the research
* Data collection is explicitly directed at Aboriginal peoples
* Aboriginal peoples, as a group, are to be examined in the results
* The information has an impact on one or more Aboriginal communities
* Aboriginal health funds are a source of funding

Research that is not specifically directed at Aboriginal people or communities, such as for the total population or a sub-population (eg. rural NSW, people over 50 years old) can still potentially impact on Aboriginal people.

However, an application for such research need only be made to the Committee if *any* one of the following applies:

* Any of the five factors listed above are present; or
* Aboriginal people are known, or are likely, to be significantly over-represented in the group being studied; or
* The Aboriginal experience of the medical condition being studied is known, or is likely, to be different from the overall population; or
* There are Aboriginal people who use the services being studied in distinctive ways, or who have distinctive barriers that limit their access to the services; or
* It is proposed to separately identify data relating to Aboriginal people in the results.

The AH&MRC ethics committee have some specific requirements, including evidence of community engagement in the research. Relevant documents can be found on the AH&MRC website at: <http://www.ahmrc.org.au>. If you are unsure whether an application to the AH&MRC Ethics Committee is required, please seek the advice of the Ethics Committee secretariat (T: 02 9212 4777; E: [ahmrc@ahmrc.org.au](mailto:ahmrc@ahmrc.org.au)).

## Delegated Data custodian

Chief Health Officer

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## Record linkage of RBDM births and Perinatal Data Collection data

Two datasets contain information on births: ACT Births, Deaths and Marriages (ACT RBDM) birth registration data and the Maternal Perinatal Data Collection (MPDC). The MPDC provides information about the mother’s and baby’s health, pregnancy care, and pregnancy outcomes. The MPDC is a separate dataset requiring separate data custodian sign off through ACT Health. For more detailed information on MPDC see <http://www.cherel.org.au/data-dictionaries>.

Birth registrations held by the ACT RBDM contain full personal identifiers for the biological mother and other parent. ACT RBDM births also include child’s name. The MPDC contains full personal identifiers for the biological mother, but not for the baby. The CHeReL is able to link ACT RBDM birth registration data with MPDC using the biological mother’s personal identifiers.

The CHeReL website contains information on studies investigating the validity of data collections including the MPDC and ACT RBDM (see <http://www.cherel.org.au/validation-studies>).

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## ACTBDM birth registrations - variable information

| **Variable** | **Description/Notes** | **Codes** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Mother Aboriginality** | Information on the Mother’s Aboriginality  If the mother is not reported as Aboriginal, and the father is reported as Aboriginal, the child is assigned the code for Aboriginality only if paternity has been acknowledged.  See notes above regarding access to this variable. | 1 = Australian Aboriginal  2 = Torres Strait Islander  3 = Both Australian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  4 = Non Indigenous  9 = Not stated |
| **Father Aboriginality** | Information on the Father’s Aboriginality  If the mother is not reported as Aboriginal, and the father is reported as Aboriginal, the child is assigned the code for Aboriginality only if paternity has been acknowledged.  See notes above regarding access to this variable. | 1 = Australian Aboriginal  2 = Torres Strait Islander  3 = Both Australian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  4 = Non Indigenous  9 = Not stated |
| **Baby’s date of birth** | Date of Birth (Baby) |  |
| **Mother’s date of birth** | Date of Birth (Mother) |  |
| **Other parent’s date of birth** | Date of Birth (other parent) |  |
| **Date of registration** | Date Registered by ACT BDM |  |
| **Baby’s sex** | Sex of baby | 1= male  2= female  3= indeterminate  9= unknown |
| **Stillbirth flag** | Stillbirth flag | 0 No  1 Yes  9 Not stated |
| **Birth order** | Order of individual birth within a multiple birth | 1 First  2 Second  3 Third  … |
| **Age of father/other parent (years)** | This code depicts the other parent’s /father’s age in years. | If age is not given or not known/not relevant (code 998) it is coded to missing. |
| **Age of mother (years)** | This code depicts the mothers age in years. | If age is not given it is coded to missing. |
| **Postcode** | Postcode |  |
| **Plurality** | Plurality is a code giving the birth order for multiple births. | 1 Single  2 Twins  3 Triplets  … |