

Finding Your Birth Mother

1. Get a copy of your own original, pre-adoptive birth certificate.

Get a copy of your own original, pre-adoptive birth certificate if you do not already have it. This will give your mother's name at the time of your birth.

You need to go to [Family and Whanau, Adoption and Fostering, Finding your birth parents](#) on the *Government* website to order the certificate.

The certificate will give your mother's age at your birth. From this you can estimate the year she would have been born and look in the **Births' Indexes** on microfiche at the library. The ages on certificates are not always correct so you may have to look up to 10 years either side of your estimate.

Once you have confirmed her name and year of birth you can request a copy of her birth certificate from the [Passports, Citizenship and Identity](#) page on the *Government* website to get details of your grandparents and where your mother was born.

Māori births up to 1962 are listed in a separate sequence filed at the beginning of the **Births' Index**.

If you cannot find your mother's birth in the Index she may have been born overseas.

2. Has your mother married?

Note: Marriage is the most common reason why a woman changes her name.

Search on the library **Family History CDROM Catalogue** in the **NZ Marriages 1836 – 1956 Index** to find her husband and married name.

You can then request either the marriage certificate or a printout of the registration to get further details.

Your mother may have had other children. Look in the **Births' Index** under her married name. The place where their births were registered may give an indication of where your mother lives. You may wish to trace your half brothers and sisters as well.

3. Check the electoral rolls.

If you have your mother's marriage certificate or a copy of the registration entry you will know where the marriage took place and can look through the electoral rolls for that area first. If the library has electoral rolls for the year after the marriage, look to see if you can find your mother in them.

If you do, look in the latest rolls for the same area in case she is still living there. Otherwise you will have to look through the rolls for the entire country. Look under both her married name and under her birth name in case she did not change her name on marrying or has since divorced and changed her name back.

Remember that more than one person can have the same name so you cannot automatically assume that the first one you find is your mother. If you know her husband's full name, look to see if he is living at the same address. If he isn't, they may have separated or it may be a different woman. Look through the whole set of rolls to see if there is anyone else with the same name.

There are five Māori rolls at the end of the sequence. If you think your mother may be Māori look in these first.

4. Making contact

When you find your mother in the electoral rolls you can then go to the phone book to get her telephone number and check her address. Either phone or write tactfully before going to see her. Your arrival may be a shock and her family may not know about you.

You can also get assistance from the:

**Adoption Information & Services Unit
Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children
1207 Pukuatua Street
PO Box 1845 Rotorua
Phone: 0508 326 459 and ask for the Rotorua Adoption Unit.**

5. If you cannot find her in the electoral rolls:

- She may have died - check **NZ Burial Index / Locator** on the **Family History CDROM Catalogue**.
- She may have gone back to using her birth or maiden name. Look in the electoral rolls again under this name if you have not already done so.
- She may have changed her name by deed poll. We have an index to **Changes of Name by Deedpoll for 1985-1994** only. If she changed her name before or after this, you have no way of finding out.
- She may be living overseas.
- She may have married overseas but come back to New Zealand and be listed under her married name.
- She may be on a supplementary electoral roll which has not been printed yet. Wait until the next lot of rolls are published and look through them again. Rolls are usually published once each year and twice in an election year.
- The supplementary rolls are held on computer but each electorate office only has the roll for their own electorate so you need to know where to ask.
- She may not have enrolled. All adults are legally required to enrol, but a few do not. Try looking in the New Zealand phone books.

6. Looking further.

If you have not been able to find your birth mother following the steps in this leaflet and you want to continue looking, contact the Rotorua Branch New Zealand Society of Genealogists. Members of this group have many years' experience in researching family history and may be able to suggest other places to look.

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Another useful source is the website [Adoption Jigsaw](#) who can assist you with information, counselling, search, contact and mediation.