

Submission on the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Registration Act 1995

In response to the Proposals paper "Access to the registers" 21 March 2016

Contact Details

Name: Joanne Schneebeil

General access rules

Yes, I support the proposals.

Historical and non-historical information

Yes, I support the proposals. However, the timeframe for aligning the rules for access to death information is far too long, particularly where early death has occurred and medical research, which is constantly changing through advances in genetics, is being undertaken. My two daughters died of different but apparently unrelated cancers. One aged 33 of cervical cancer and the other aged 40 of ovarian cancer. I am unaware of previous family deaths being historically connected. 120 years is ridiculous with modern scientific research. Even 50 years is a life time in this area.

Source documents

Yes, I support the proposals. There seems little point in having two different registers, although the ItM Register is obviously very historical. Even today's marriage registers are virtually incomplete when so many couples divorce, re-marry or just live together in an unregistered form.

Remaining access provisions

I disagree. I think the current "disclosure of death information" is wrong, particularly where it relates to children who predecease their parents. I look at this provision entirely from that aspect and am passionate about it being changed. Currently when someone dies, the death certificate only records their living children. When my husband died in 2002, he had three living children. Since then our two daughters have died of cancer. When I die my death certificate will show I have one living child. There is no indication that like my husband, I once had three children. Hence, no explanation for the discrepancy in our death certificates (Did he marry twice? Did he have two illegitimate children?).

It is also unacceptable and disrespectful to me that my two daughters did not matter enough in the eyes of the law to be recorded on my death certificate simply by the fact that they predeceased me. This sentiment has been repeated countless times by many other people I have spoken to and who have been through the same experience, but are totally unaware of that offensive anomaly.

During the last 12 months there has been huge recognition of the heroism and sacrifice of the tens of thousands of young people who lost their lives in war. There are memorials to them all over the world in the form of memorial halls, cenotaphs, statues, cemeteries and museums totally dedicated to their commemoration and rightly so. Yet their parents were totally denied the basic right for

those same dearly loved sons and daughters to be recognised or acknowledged on the death certificates of those same parents. This is not respectful. I have been communicating with the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding this matter since 2012 and look forward to some positive resolution.

I understand that this review is really limited to the provisions that govern public access to records and I do not profess to have given this matter the consideration that I have to the matter to which I refer, but I am determined to take this opportunity to bring this horrendous anomaly to your attention. My major concern is, I understand, relevant to regulation 7(2)(xiid) of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationship Registration but I trust you will seriously consider this issue as it relates to the disclosure of the death certificate section of your current review. Now, at 73, I appreciate this opportunity to raise this issue once more in the hope that the law will change before it is necessary for my son to fill in my death certificate. I want it to be complete and include all three of my precious children as does my husband's.

Joanne Schneebeil

24 April 2016