

Using the Mailbox Service

Information for adoptive parent/s, birth families and people who have been adopted



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The Mailbox Service is provided by Adoption Services to receive and forward correspondence and other items, between people who are parties to an adoption in Queensland. The birth parent/s, adoptive parent/s, and the adopted person may choose to exchange letters, cards or small gifts with each other through the Mailbox Service.

The child can use the Mailbox Service if their adoptive parent has given consent in writing. Extended members of the birth family, such as grandparents, can also correspond through the Mailbox Service, with the birth parent's consent.

Parties to an adoption can use the Mailbox Service to exchange identifying information, after a final Adoption Order is made.

During the 12-month Interim Adoption Order period, the Mailbox Service can be used to exchange non-identifying and identifying information.

Exchanging non-identifying information

For the exchange of non-identifying information, Adoption Services will review all correspondence before it is forwarded to the other party, to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

If identifying or inappropriate information is sent through the Mailbox Service, the sender is given an opportunity to make changes. If this is not possible, Adoption Services will make the necessary changes, such as removing or 'blacking out' identifying information.

The original correspondence containing identifying information will be held, and can be forwarded to the adopted person once they turn 18 years old, or to the other party once Adoption Services approves the exchange of identifying information. Adoption Services will keep a record of all correspondence and gifts exchanged through the Mailbox Service.

Small gifts may be forwarded through the Mailbox Service for special events, such as birthdays and Christmas. Gifts must not be sealed or wrapped, to allow Adoption Services to check that they are not identifying. If possible, please supply wrapping paper for gifts to be wrapped.

Money orders, cash, gift or credit vouchers cannot be exchanged through the Mailbox Service, as they can be traced back to the store where they were purchased and identify the party to the adoption. These items will be returned to the sender.



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Photographs of children under two years of age are considered to be non-identifying, and can be exchanged through the Mailbox Service. Photographs of children over two years old are considered as identifying, and consent must be given by all parties to the adoption before the photographs can be exchanged. Photographs must not have identifying names written on them.

Exchanging identifying information

Identifying information includes any information that could identify a person, their location or a family member – such as surnames, addresses, names of schools or workplaces, names of extended family members, contact details, or details about particular events such as sport competitions, or holiday destinations.

Identifying information can only be exchanged when all parties to the adoption give consent in writing, and the exchange is made through the Mailbox Service. If the child is under 18 years old, Adoption Services will assess whether the sharing of identifying information is in the child's best interests, before the information can be exchanged.

The benefits of using the Mailbox Service

Using the Mailbox Service to communicate with each other benefits the adopted person, birth family and adoptive parents by:

- reinforcing positive family relationships for the adopted child as they grow into adulthood
- exchanging information about a child's birth history, the birth family's medical and social history
- understanding the reasons for the child's adoption
- enabling the child to develop a relationship with their birth family, without feeling disloyal to their adoptive family.

Setting up the Mailbox Service

To set up the Mailbox Service, a Notice of Intention to *Take Part in Mailbox Service* form must be completed and sent to Adoption Services, along with proof of identity documents.

This forms an agreement for one party to correspond with the other party to an adoption, and states the type of information to be exchanged and names to be used.

If a person has not provided written agreement to participate in the Mailbox Service, Adoption Services will not contact this person if correspondence is received. Adoption Services can only forward correspondence to adoptive parents or birth parents when written permission has been given to receive correspondence.

When it is not possible for correspondence to be forwarded, Adoption Services will hold these items on file. This may occur if one party disengages, or if a forwarding address is unknown. Adoption Services will advise the sender that these items will be held until the recipient makes contact.

If one party has not used the Mailbox Service for a period of time, Adoption Services will try to contact them to talk about re-establishing their Mailbox Service.

Adoption Services requires up to two weeks to process Mailbox Service correspondence. For special events, such as birthdays or Christmas, the processing time is four weeks. To ensure correspondence is delivered before Christmas day, correspondence must be forwarded to Adoption Services by 1 December.

If English is not the main language of one of the parties, Adoption Services will discuss options for translation of correspondence.

Birth parents and adoptive parents must also inform Adoption Services of any change in contact details or addresses.

All mailbox correspondence must be sent to:
Mailbox Service
Adoption Services
Locked Bag 3405
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Sending correspondence by email

Parties to an adoption may choose to send correspondence, including photographs, through the Mailbox Service by email ads.mailbox@csyw.qld.gov.au. The sender must include their name and the name of the recipient, in their email.

Adoption Services will review the email to ensure it does not contain any identifying information. The information is then recorded and forwarded, or held, in accordance with the mailbox agreement.

Parties to an adoption who choose to correspond by email will receive an email from 'secure.mailbox@csyw.qld.gov.au' by Adoption Services. The email will have the word 'Encrypted' in the subject line, to ensure it can only be accessed by the intended recipient.

When forwarding correspondence by email, Adoption Services takes care to ensure a person's privacy is protected.

First-time users will be prompted to register free of charge, with the Cisco Registered Envelope Service — a secure email service designed to protect a person's privacy.

To register, select the 'Register' button within the email, and then complete the 'New User Registration' online form. Users will then receive an email to activate the service. All future mailbox correspondence by email will be received by entering the login and password details for the secure email service.

For more information, go to <https://res.cisco.com/websafe/help>



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Further information

Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

Adoption Services

Phone: 1800 647 983 (free call within Queensland)
or 3097 5100

Email: ads@csyw.qld.gov.au

Website: www.qld.gov.au/adoption