

# Document certification guide

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# Introduction

The process of certifying that a document is a true copy of an original is used when a person does not provide the original document to an organisation that needs to see or retain it. It allows for non-face-to-face documentary verification. This process is not directly covered by legislation in Australia or New Zealand. Instead, the authority to verify that a document is a true copy of an original is usually conferred by the organisation requesting the certified document on individuals or groups whom they trust. For this reason, chartered accountants are frequently cited.

It is common practice for organisations to accept documents to be certified by persons who are authorised to witness statutory declarations. In New Zealand, the [\*Oaths and Declarations Act 1957\*](#) does not permit chartered accountants to witness statutory declarations. In Australia, requirements in the relevant legislation vary between different states and territories. While Chartered Accountants are often included in these lists of authorised persons, the relevant legislation should be checked to confirm that a chartered accountant still appears in the list.

## Wording

There is no set wording in law that must be used when certifying a document. However, some organisations specify the wording to be used and will not accept any deviations. So check with the person whether a certification guide was provided and whether it has specific wording for certain purposes.

If there is no prescribed wording, you should write the following on each copy (or a statement to a similar effect).

### For photo ID:

*I certify that I have seen the original document and that the photograph is a true likeness and this copy is a complete and accurate copy of that original.*

### For non-photo ID:

*I certify that I have seen the original document and this copy is a complete and accurate copy of that original.*

In addition, the following details should be included:

- Your full name
- The date of certification
- Your signature
- 'Chartered Accountant'
- CA ANZ member number (this is so the recipient can verify you are in fact a member).

The wording should not express any opinion as to the authenticity of the document as certifying a copy does not in any way 'authenticate' either the copy or the original document. When certifying a document, you are only stating your opinion that the document is a true copy of the original.

## Standard method

The person requesting you to certify copies of documents should present to you the original document, the photocopy, and any standard wording to be used.

Whilst you do not have to verify the original, you should check the original is genuine to the best of your ability. For example, if someone has a printout from a website (eg a utility bill), this is essentially a copy and you need to see the original document on a computer.

In summary:

- Check with the person (or through an independent check on the appropriate website) that a Chartered Accountant is listed as an acceptable certifier by the requesting organisation or the relevant legislation (if applicable)
- Always sight the original document (but do not write anything on the original)
- Ensure it is recent (ie within the last three months) and/or current (ie not expired)
- Check any photograph is a true likeness (ie recent) of the individual
- Satisfy yourself that the photocopy is a true copy
- Write the wording on the copy.

## Specific application to NZ AML

Chartered Accountants are 'trusted referees' for document certification for identity verification purposes under the New Zealand anti-money laundering (AML) legislation. The [\*Amended Identity Verification Code of Practice 2013\*](#) (IVCOP) says a trusted referee must be at least 16 years of age. In addition, they must not:

- Be related to the person (eg parent, child, sibling, aunt, uncle or cousin);
- Be the spouse or partner of the person;
- Live at the same address as the person; or
- Be involved in the transaction or business requiring the certification.

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