

Practice Note 20 – Certifying Copies of Electronic Documents

The gradual transition to paperless post creates a challenge for notaries, when asked to certify documents for proof of address purposes. Most utility invoices are sent in electronic form only, and it is impossible to distinguish between a posted hard copy and a printed copy of the electronic version fresh from the applicant's printer. A similar issue arises with copies of electronic residence, work, and other visas issued by Immigration New Zealand which are not affixed to the applicant's passport.

As with other aspects of notarial work:

- there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and
- only certify that which is within your knowledge.

Here are some optional solutions to consider, either on their own or in combination:

- Rather than directly emailing a copy of the electronic invoice to you, ask the applicant to *forward* the original email from the issuer, including the invoice as an attachment. You may wish to refer to this process in your notarial certificate.;
- Amend your notarial certificate to refer to the attached copy being a true and correct copy of the *electronic original* or *electronic version* seen by you;
- Qualify your notarial certificate to the effect that the copy is a true copy, to the best of your knowledge and belief, based on enquiries made by you;
- For the purposes of the your enquires, a search of the White Pages <https://whitepages.co.nz/> can be a simple form of address verification;
- A more detailed form of enquiry is to ask the applicant to log into the online account of the invoice provider, and to provide in your notarial certificate that the attached copy is a true copy of the electronic document that appears on the applicant's account with the issuer's website.
- In the case of visa certification (for an electronic visa not affixed to a passport), ask the applicant to log into the Immigration New Zealand online portal, in your presence, to enable you to sight the visa. You may wish to refer to this process in your certificate. Most importantly, check that the hard copy or email copy provided by the applicant includes all pages of the electronic version of the visa, and not just the pages that the applicant has deemed relevant.