



# AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL  
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

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## Sources – land and pastoral station records

Aboriginal stock workers and domestic staff worked for generations on pastoral stations, particularly in northern Australia. If someone in your family was born, passed away or worked on a pastoral property it's a good idea to find out if any records were kept on that station and whether they still exist.

Station owners and managers might have kept records about the people they employed or about Aboriginal people who lived on the station. Even if you don't find direct information about your ancestor, finding out about where they lived or worked can help you understand what their life was like.

Unfortunately because most pastoral properties were privately owned, survival of station records is dependent on the foresight of owners and the amount of value they placed on their records. For this reason some have been deposited in official repositories, some are kept privately, many have been lost or destroyed. It is also possible that many records are still in private family hands but not sorted or listed anywhere.

### What are land and pastoral station records?

Land and pastoral station records include materials about:

- the ownership and management of land – mostly created by government agencies
- the management of rural properties – mostly created by station owners and managers.

The records might include pastoral maps, land surveys, documents of land ownership, diaries, wage and ration books, registers of birth and registers of employees.

### What information do you need to look for land and station records?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person who lived or worked on the property
- the name of the property or, at very least, the property's general location.

If you don't know the name of the property, pastoral directories might be helpful. These were published listings of pastoral properties, their names, owners and locations.



The most comprehensive directory was the Australian Pastoral Directory, but it did not include properties in Western Australia. There were many other short-lived directories.

Pastoral directories and maps that might help you to identify a property are held at the Noel Butlin Archives in Canberra. You can also search the Australian Pastoral Directories (1913–1954) in Find My Past. <https://search.findmypast.com.au/search-world-Records/australian-pastoral-directories>. This is a subscription family history site but you can visit your state or territory library or even a local library to search this site for free. State and local libraries also often hold printed copies of pastoral directories.

## Where do you find land and pastoral station records?

### Land and property title records

State and territory government land and title agencies can help you to find information about pastoral properties. They hold pastoral maps, land survey information and detailed records of who bought and sold properties over time. If you can't find accessible information from government land agency websites, remember most archives and libraries have good fact sheets about searching land records including pastoral lands.

### Australian Capital Territory

- ACT Land Information System – <https://actlis.act.gov.au/>

### New South Wales

- Land Registry Services: Historical research - [http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land\\_titles/historical\\_research](http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land_titles/historical_research)
- Land Registry Services: Parish and historical maps - [http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land\\_titles/historical\\_research/parish\\_maps](http://www.nswlrs.com.au/land_titles/historical_research/parish_maps)

### Northern Territory

- NT Historic map index – includes many Pastoral station maps - <http://www.ntlis.nt.gov.au/imfPublic/historicMapImf.jsp>
- Northern Territory Land Supply and Property Information - <https://nt.gov.au/property/land/find-land-records/get-land-information-online>

- Northern Territory Archives Service: Guide to archives relating to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory - [https://dta.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/267885/pastoral\\_guide.pdf](https://dta.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/267885/pastoral_guide.pdf)

National Archives of Australia: Records about the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory - <http://guides.naa.gov.au/records-about-northern-territory/part1/chapter1/1.4.aspx>

## Queensland

- Department of Natural Resources and Mines: Land and property - <https://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/land>
- Museum of Lands, mapping and surveying - <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/museum-of-lands>
- Queensland State Archives Lands and mining - <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/archives/lands>

## South Australia

- Housing, property and land: About historical searching <http://www.sa.gov.au/topics/planning-and-property/buying-a-home-or-property/researching-a-property/about-historical-searching>

## Tasmania

- Land Tasmania - <http://dpiwve.tas.gov.au/land-tasmania>

## Victoria

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning: Property and Land titles - <https://www.propertyandlandtitles.vic.gov.au/>

## Western Australia

- Landgate: Historical records - <http://www.landgate.wa.gov.au/titles-and-surveys/historical-records>

## Pastoral station records

Records that provide historical information about pastoral properties vary across place and time so it might take some digging to find things that are relevant to your family history. Here are some suggestions for where to look.

- A search of Trove - <http://trove.nla.gov.au> - for the name of the station or property might find books, images, oral histories or newspaper articles about the property.
- Some station owners or managers kept records like diaries, wage and ration books, and registers of births, deaths and marriages. The Noel Butlin Archives Centre <http://archives.anu.edu.au/collections/noel-butlin-archives-centre> at the Australian National University in Canberra holds some of these records, mainly for farms and cattle properties in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- State libraries and archives can provide help in finding land records. Have a look at these research resources:

### **New South Wales**

- Land records available at State Records NSW - <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/land-records-available-state-records>

### **Queensland**

- Land records from the State Library of Queensland <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/family-history/land-records>
- Queensland Museum of Lands, mapping and surveying <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/museum-of-lands>
- Queensland: Queensland State Archives – Lands and Mining <https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/archives/lands>

### **South Australia**

- Family History SA – Land, maps, place names - <http://www.familyhistorysa.org/>

### **Victoria**

- Public Record Office of Victoria Researching Land and property - <https://www.prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/researching-land-and-property>

### **Tasmania**

- LINC Tasmania research guides, including land titles, place names, building histories <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/default.aspx>

## Victoria

- Researching your Victorian ancestors: Land records - <https://guides.slv.vic.gov.au/c.php?g=245235&p=1632907>

## Western Australia

- Landgate historical records - <https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/titles-and-surveys/historical-records>

Local archives, historical and family history societies often have records relating to their local area, which might include copies of station records, photographs and maps.

If the station or property still exists, the current or previous owners might still have station records. The local historical society or library might be able to put you in touch, or you can contact the Noel Butlin Archives Centre (which holds pastoral station records) for help tracking ownership - <http://archives.anu.edu.au/collections/noel-butlin-archives-centre>.

Ancestry and Find My Past provide access to certain land and property records. Remember you can use these subscription family history websites at a state or local library for free.

The genealogy website, CoraWeb, has a section on maps, place names and land records. <http://coraweb.com.au/categories/maps-places-and-land-records>