Government building records

DR2675 - Brisbane Customs House, Queen Street, ca 1890
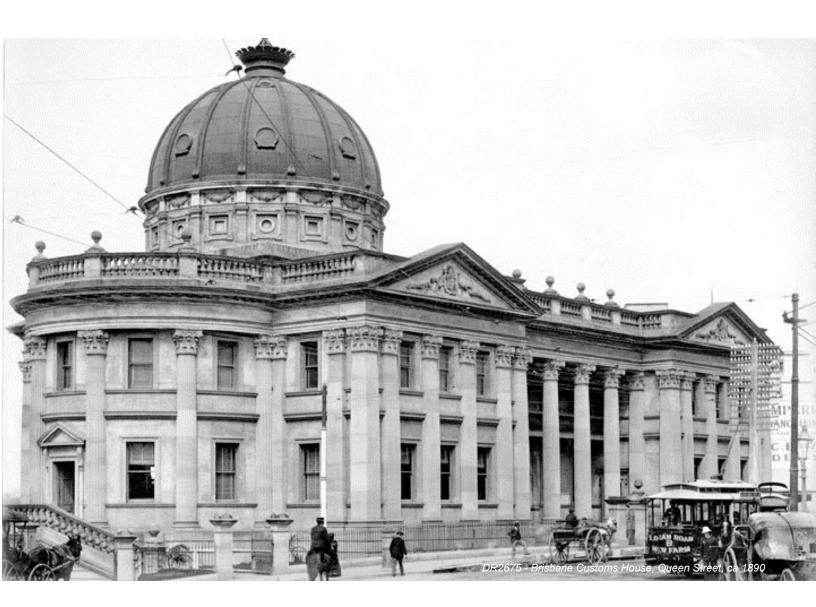
Research Guide to government building records at Queensland State Archives

Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the official repository for Queensland Government records selected for permanent retention because of their continuing value. The archived public records are from state government departments, state courts, local government authorities and statutory authorities. The records are in our facility at Runcorn, Brisbane, and open records are available for viewing in the Reading Room, free-of-charge.

QSA holds archival records about buildings constructed by or for the Colonial and State government, courts, local government and buildings owned or occupied by these agencies. There are some records of Colonial and State government buildings which were later transferred to the Federal government.

The main finding aid for records held at QSA is the Queensland State Archives' online catalogue (known as ArchivesSearch).

The following citation abbreviations are used throughout our catalogue:

ITM	QSA Item (describes the item)
PR	Physical Representation (generally the original or microfilm copy)
DR	Digital Representation (for a digital image)
S	Series (for a series of records)
A	Agency ID (for the creating or responsible agency).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that our catalogue contains images, names and voices of people who have died.

Background

Records about government buildings are described in this guide and include a variety of government buildings such as court houses, police stations, state schools, railway stations, lighthouses, post and telegraph offices, hospitals, pilot stations, drill halls and rifle ranges, quarantine stations, and offices of government departments.

The amount and type of information available on government buildings varies depending on the type of building and the likely date of construction. In some instances, records may include plans and specifications, architectural drawings, tenders for construction, and correspondence about the building's construction and maintenance. There is no single name index which lists all references to public buildings. This guide lists groups of records by the public authority who created the records, including Clerk of Works, Moreton Bay, and by type of public building, such as schools.

Most official records concerning government buildings prior to the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859 are held by the State Records Authority of New South Wales at Kingswood, Sydney. Contact details are available at http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/contact-us/contact-us

Clerk of Works, Moreton Bay

Correspondence
1856–1859
S11893

Letterbook
4/3/1856–10/12/1859
S11894

Government Resident, Moreton Bay

Correspondence
23/4/1855–28/12/1857
S12755

Miscellaneous In-Letters
16/2/1853–22/8/1860
S12749

Letters Addressed to the Government Resident by the Colonial Secretary, Sydney
10/1/1849–26/12/1856
S12748

Commandant's Office, Moreton Bay

Moreton Bay Penal Settlement Maps and Architectural Drawings
28/9/1830–31/12/1848
S3739

Surveyor-General's Office, New South Wales

Survey Plans, Charts and Maps of Moreton Bay Settlement and Queensland
1/12/1823–28/11/1845
S4314

Colonial Secretary's Office

From December 1859 to about April 1862 the Colonial Secretary's Office was responsible for Public Works. The indexes and registers for the letters received can be used to find letter numbers. Online PDF files of the registers and indexes are available, refer to *Research guide to Colonial Secretary's correspondence 1859–1903*.

Register – correspondence inwards
15/12/1859–10/1/1861
S6904

Register – correspondence inwards
2/1/1861–31/10/1861
S6905

Index – Correspondence Registers
1/1/1861–31/12/1861
S6879

Index – Correspondence Registers

1/1/1862–31/12/1862
S6880

Letterbook Relating to Public Works
15/3/1860–8/1/1864
S5271

Lands and Works Department

In April 1862 the newly established Lands and Works Office assumed responsibility for public works.

Indexes to Letters Received
1/4/1862–31/8/1866
S13755

Registers of Letters Received
1/4/1862–20/3/1871
S13756

Correspondence Received
1/1/1862–31/12/1866
S13757

Indexes to Letterbooks – Works matters
15/5/1862–18/8/1866
S13760

Letterbooks
15/5/1862–18/8/1866
S13761

Public Works Department

The Department of Public Works was established in 1866. Its responsibilities included the construction and maintenance of government buildings and the supervision of contracts for the construction of government buildings by private firms.

Miscellaneous Specifications and Papers related to Public Buildings
1/1/1836–31/12/1968
S6910

Specifications for Queensland Government Buildings
1/1/1861–31/1/1974
S16433

Architectural Drawings of Public Buildings
1/4/1819–31/12/1971
S17690

This series includes plans and drawings of schools, proposed buildings, bridges, tropical housing, air raid precaution shelters, memorials, gate design.

Photographs of Government Buildings
1/1/1890–31/12/1900
S5425

Architectural Drawings of Public Buildings
Circa 1/1/1857–19/2/2001
S1162

This series comprises architectural drawings for a diverse range of public buildings in Queensland including educational institutions, e.g. schools; penal institutions e.g. prisons; hospitals; orphanages; aged persons homes; court houses; police stations; Parliament; public facilities e.g. museums, libraries, botanical gardens; and, other public offices e.g. lands offices, taxation, bank premises, Anzac Square building. Search by type of building and place, for example, Bundaberg court house.

Architectural and Engineering Drawings of Public Buildings
Circa 1/1/1850–1/1/1980
S19806

Department of Public Works correspondence contains files on buildings of all types including some State government buildings which have since been transferred to the Commonwealth government. Relevant information can be found using the yearly indexes to registers of letters received.

Indexes to Letters Received
1/8/1866–31/12/1881
S16492

Register of File Numbers - Certain Buildings Throughout Queensland
1/1/1883–31/12/1925
S16462

Use this register to find records in S16455. A digital copy of this register, labelled *Register of file numbers for buildings, QLD 1883 - 1925 WOR_B40,* is on our Reading Room computers under the *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* tile.

Registers of Letters Received
1/8/1866–31/12/1908
WOR/B1-39
S16483
Use this register to find records in S16455.

Card Registers of General Correspondence
1/1/1909–31/12/1928
WOR/B41-60
S16452

Use this register to find records in S16455.

General Correspondence
1/1/1866–31/12/1928
S16455

Use the following finding aids to find letter numbers:
- the digital copy of S16462, Register of File Numbers available in the Reading Room. It is labelled *WOR/B40,* and is on our Reading Room computers under the *Finding Aids by QSA, Other* tile.
- Registers of Letters Received, S16483

Card Index to Residual File Numbers
1/1/1883–31/12/1928
S16490

Batch Files (General Correspondence)
5/9/1908–15/6/1998
S1173

Indexes to Correspondence Batches
01/01/1974– 31/12/1974
S10353

Batch Files - 'E' Series - Government Buildings
1/1/1875– 31/12/1981
S17830
Use Indexes to correspondence batches, S10353 to find letters in these batch files.

Batch Files - 'G' Series - Lands Offices
1/1/1898–31/12/1970
S17833
Use Indexes to correspondence batches, S10353 to find letters in these batch files.

Department of Public Works also created registers of financial aspects of building construction and maintenance. Most are arranged alphabetically by name of town or chronologically with an index by town name.

Detail Ledger – Buildings
1/1/1860 - 31/12/1910
S6877

Detail Ledger – Commonwealth Buildings
1/1/1908 - 31/12/1911
S6887

Contract Ledger
1/1/1877 – 31/12/1917
S6883

Tender Books
1/1/1884 - 31/12/1933
S6875

Town Detail Appropriation Ledger
1/1/1885 - 31/12/1905
S6889

Colonial Architect's Office

Correspondence, letterbooks and financial records of the Colonial Architect's Office (later Government Architect) for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the Deputy Government Architect from 1907 to 1916 are also relevant for building research. The Colonial Architect's letterbooks contain some reports on privately owned buildings used for public purposes, e.g. theatres. The letterbooks of the district Architects, from the Northern, Central and Southern Districts 1900–1907 provide useful information on buildings in centres outside Brisbane. Letterbooks of the Foreman of Works and Inspector of Works, 1892–1916 are also available.

Letterbooks of the Deputy Architect
4/3/1907–6/3/1916
S12727

Letterbooks of the District Architect, Southern Division
6/3/1900–10/9/1904
S12739

Letterbooks of the District Architect, Northern and Central Divisions
5/3/1901–4/3/1907
S12737

Letterbooks Foreman of Works and Inspector
22/10/1895–9/4/1900
S16436

Letterbooks of the Inspector of Works
30/6/1897–11/3/1916
S16437

State Government Insurance Office

Plans of Government and Business Premises
19/1/1909–20/12/1967
S17583

Block Plans – Country
27/9/1907–21/1/1935
S17582

Co-ordinator General's Department

Building contract plans and documents
1/2/1935–31/10/1970
S18269

Specific types of buildings

Schools

Information on the construction and maintenance of school buildings and teachers' residences is in the records of the Works Department and the Education Department. Education Department records about State and non-vested grammar schools frequently contain details from the 1860s onwards.

Detail Ledger – Schools
1/1/1885–31/12/1909
S6878

Contract Ledger – Schools
1/1/1870–31/12/1916
S6884

Plans of School Buildings
Circa 23/4/1896-Circa 21/3/1908
S5427

Correspondence School Buildings
1/1/1893–31/12/1905
S16442

School Files (Correspondence) for State Schools
1/1/1858–23/1/1968
S12607

School Files (Correspondence) State (Secondary) High and Grammar Schools
6/10/1873–31/12/1963
S12603

Batch Files – Schools
1/1/1879–31/12/1984
S17826

Batch Files - 'A' Series - High Schools and Technical Colleges
1/1/1896–31/12/1974
S17828

Police Stations

Batch Files - C Series - Police Stations
30/9/1895–5/2/1986
S10416

Lighthouses

Batch Files - J Series - Lighthouses and Other Marine Buildings
28/12/1893–16/12/1968
S10351

Miscellaneous Correspondence - Public Buildings
Circa 1/1/1860–Circa 31/12/1871
S12735

Marine Survey Charts and Drawings of Marine Infrastructure and Vessels
Circa 1/1/1860–Circa 31/12/1969
S17709

Many lighthouse records are also available at the National Archives of Australia.

Post and Telegraph Offices

Appropriation Ledger, Commonwealth Buildings
1/1/1911–31/12/1915
S6908

Lists of Properties Transferred to the Commonwealth upon Federation
1/1/1906–12/8/1916
S8574

Registers of Post Offices, Railway Stations, Towns and Localities, Including Schools
4/9/1912–14/12/1977
S8547

Many Queensland post and telegraph records are at the National Archives of Australia.

Hospitals and Health Facilities

Batch files "D" – Hospitals
1/1/1890–31/12/1985
S17829

Mental Hospital Architectural Plans
1/1/1918–31/12/1970
S17697

Batch Files - 'F' Series - Health and Welfare Buildings
1/1/1912–31/12/1971

S17831

Batch Files - 'H' Series - Ambulance Buildings
1/1/1912-31/12/1936
S17834

Batch Files - 'K' Series - Baby Clinics or Maternal and Child Welfare Centres
1/1/1918-31/12/1986
S17835

Other sources of information

- Public Works Department, *Departmental guide 1866-1890* available on Reading Room computers under *Other Finding Aids by QSA* tile
- Information about Queensland Housing Commission architectural styles in the *Research Guide to the History of your house*
- Information about railway station buildings in the *Research Guide to Railway records*
- Generally, QSA does not have records of buildings of private individuals, churches, businesses, clubs or associations. For further assistance, you may contact the John Oxley Library in the State Library of Queensland, or the Cultural & Heritage Collections in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Need more information?

Check our online catalogue ArchivesSearch.
Phone us on (07) 3037 6777 or you can email an archivist.