Queensland State Archives’ record systems

Research Guide to Queensland State Archives’ record systems
Principles of arrangement

The record systems at Queensland State Archives (QSA) follow two archival principles: the principles of provenance and original order. The term ‘provenance’ refers to the creator and/or custodian of the records. The term ‘original order’ refers to the order in which records were created or maintained by the public servants who originally used them. The finding aids to these records are arranged according to the title of the agency directly responsible for their creation and/or collection, and the records are kept in their original order.

To find a particular record, the general process for searching is:
- identify the government agency which created, kept or is responsible for the record
- identify the relevant series created or kept by that agency (a series are records grouped by subject or function)
- identify the required item using the Queensland State Archives’ catalogue, or other finding aid.

Systems previously in use at QSA are consolidated in our online catalogue available in our Reading Room and on our website.

Our catalogue is the main finding aid to the QSA collection. It is constantly updated. Records are found and requested using the catalogue. Previous system numbers formerly used by QSA can be used to find the item and its unique item identifier.

Unique Item Identifier

The arrangement and control of records system, the Australian Series system, was introduced in 1996 to QSA. The Australian Series system is based on the identification, registration and numbering of items, series and agencies. The system documents the items belonging to each series with item level metadata. Each item within a series is assigned a unique item identifier, or Item ID.

Keyword searching

Records in our catalogue are discoverable using keyword searching. Try searching a family name/surname, place name or a subject. This is not an archival search, however, it may open up new avenues for searching.

Other finding aids

These are available on the QSA website:
- Indexes - these online indexes are compiled from series of records held at QSA
- Research guides - short basic guides to particular groups of frequently used records

These guides are available in the Reading Room:
- Search procedures - step by step guides to assist researchers.
Access categories

Many records at QSA are open for the public to access, however, some records are subject to restricted access periods to protect the privacy of individuals. Applications for access to restricted records must be to the responsible agency. If a record is currently restricted you can apply for permission to access it through ArchivesSearch.

Staff assistance

Any difficulties in using the records or the finding aids should be referred to the Reference Archivist on duty in the Reading Room who will provide further guidance.

Digital records

Some of the open records have digitised copies available. These are found using a keyword search of the QSA catalogue, and identifying the digital representation.

Need more information?

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