



AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

Family History Unit

Freecall: 1800 352 553

Fax: 02 6261 4287

Email: familyhistory@aiatsis.gov.au

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Sources at home

A fundamental principle of family history research is to **start with yourself** and work backwards and outwards. In other words, start at home – your own home, your close relatives homes, and then keep moving out to more distant relatives.

Many people have useful information and sources for tracing their family history sitting around the house – birth, death or marriage certificates, wills, old family photos, newspaper clippings or family letters, for example.

- When you start researching your family's history, have a look around your own house to see what things you might have, especially things that have been passed down through the family. They might be photographs, documents or objects, like household items, jewellery or even furniture.
- Ask relatives if they have anything that might be useful. Older relatives might have already written down some of the family history or begun compiling a family tree or created a slideshow for a family reunion or a commemoration. Ask to make copies or use your phone to photograph items they have.
- If relatives start to see you as the 'family historian', they might be happy to give material to you. People may be happy to know someone is going to put the things they have been saving to good use.

Use a checklist

Use the Sources at home list to help you to think about all of the papers that you have at your home and the papers you might be able to ask other family members for. Of course, you won't want all these sources!

But some of them may have just the piece of information you need. For example, one of your grandfathers or great grandfathers may have served in World War 1. No one in the family has ever mentioned this to you, but you see an old photograph of a young man in uniform and ask who he is. Finding out that one of your ancestors served in WW1 means that he has a military service record. Since it's WW1, the record is available to the public and highly likely to be accessible via the Internet. Next of kin, place of enlistment, medical history and sometimes correspondence from family – all valuable information for your research.

Toolkit: Sources at home checklist.





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Sources – interviews

One of the most important parts of doing your family history is talking to older relatives and recording what they know before it's too late.

Older relatives had many experiences and remember people who have since passed away. They may also remember communities, missions or government stations that no longer exist.

If your older relatives have passed away, see if you can talk to their friends, neighbours or community elders – they might remember events involving your family.

Also, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the key source of Indigenous history, non-Aboriginal people may be able to tell you important things too.

Some relatives might be very keen to be interviewed, others hesitant or fearful. Interviews can bring up memories of hurt and embarrassment, or remind people of old feuds and family disagreements. Being interviewed may be very distressing for your relative, especially if they are talking about their own or a family member's experience of separation or other difficult events in the past.

Getting started

You can use the **Family member information sheet** as a guide to the types of information you might be looking for in your interviews.

Family gatherings. Informal conversations at family gatherings and visits are a great way to get started. Tell people that you want to do some family history and ask them what they remember. It's also a good idea to ask them if it's okay if you take notes or write things down.

Photographs. Another useful way to break the ice is to talk about old photographs. Bring along any photos you have questions about and ask your relative to bring along family pictures too.

Visiting places. You might take older relatives back to the places of their childhood and walk around with them, getting them to tell you about where all the buildings were and activities took place. You can draw a map. It's likely that memories and stories will come back to them.

Email or letter. If you can't talk with someone face to face, you may be able to ask them questions by email or letter. You'll first need to ask them if they are willing to help you and explain what and why you are doing family history research. If they are willing to help you, send them a basic list of questions (see the Family member information sheet for ideas). You can follow up with more detailed questions if you need to.



Keeping track of information

Remember to make a record of your conversation – the best way is to record it using a voice recorder or smart phone. If you take notes you might miss an important piece of information or interrupt the flow of the conversation.

If you think you might only have one chance to interview a particular relative, you should consider doing a formal oral history interview. For this you'll need to do some preparation, such as writing down the questions you want to ask.

Find out more

More information about how to do interviews and oral histories for family research is available online or through your local library.

Books

- Thomas MacEntee, *Preserving your family's oral history and stories*, Unlock the Past, 2014
- Penny Taylor & AIATSIS, *Telling it like it is: A guide to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history*, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996

Websites

- FamilySearch – Creating oral histories
familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Creating_Oral_Histories
- DoHistory – Step-by-step guide to oral history
dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html
- Smithsonian Institution – Folklife and oral history interviewing guide
www.folklife.si.edu/education_exhibits/resources/guide/introduction.aspx





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Sources – photographs

Photographs are a valuable source for family history. Both photos held in the family and those found in library, archive and museum collections can provide important research clues and help personalise your family history search.

Unfortunately many old photographs don't have much information – such as who is in the photo or when and where it was taken. Used together with your other research, however, you might be able to figure out the people and places.

Personal and family photos

When you start family history research, one of the first things you should look for is old photographs. Make a copy by scanning the photo so that you can make printouts to use while you're researching and keep the original safe at home.

Always label who is in photographs in your own collections, if you know. Do it in soft pencil on the back or on a separate piece of paper kept with them. Never use pen.

When you visit relatives, particularly older family members, take the photographs along and ask if they can identify the people or places.

Your relatives might also have copies of old family photographs you haven't seen before. Ask to borrow the photographs, get a copy made and return the original. Or you can take a photo of the photo if they are reluctant to part with it.

Ask your family members about the photos they have – the names of the people, when and where the photo was taken and what was happening.

You might consider making copies of family photographs available to your local keeping place and to AIATSIS.

Getting information from photographs

Identifying people, places and events in old family photographs can be difficult. But the images themselves can provide clues:

- The technology of photography has changed over time, and the type of photograph can help date it to a particular period – for example, small 'snapshot' photographs date from the early 20th century.



- If the photograph has the name of the photographer written on the front or the back, you might be able to work out the place and approximate date it was taken – start by searching for the photographer’s name in Trove digitised newspapers.
- Look closely at the photograph to see if there are any signs, shop names, street names or distinctive buildings in it – a search of Trove digitised newspapers might help identify the location.
- Pay attention to hairstyles and the clothes people are wearing in the photograph, especially women, as this can help you date the photograph.
- If your family lived on a particular mission, reserve or station, see if you can locate other photographs of that place and compare the landscape, buildings and even people to see if they match.

You can find lots of other tips and hints online – do a Google search for ‘dating family photos’. There are also a number of books about old family photos, such as *Identifying and dating old family photographs* by Graham Jaunay (Adelaide Proformat, 2014).

Photographs in library, archive and museum collections

Many library, archive and museum collections around Australia contain important photographic collections relating to Aboriginal people.

While the photographs may have been taken by non-Indigenous people for postcards or for pseudo-scientific study, they remain a valuable record of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their histories and cultures.

Even if these collections do not hold photographs of your family members, they might contain images of the places they lived.

AIATSIS

The AIATSIS Pictorial Collection contains around 650,000 photographs relating to Indigenous Australia, dating from the late 1800s to the present day. More than 90 per cent of the collection is unique material not held elsewhere and it is the world’s most comprehensive photographic record of Australia’s Indigenous peoples. You can search photo captions online in the Mura catalogue. Search Mura® for photographs: catalogue.aiatsis.gov.au

Some of the photos in the collection have been digitised – these can be searched and printed at the AIATSIS reading room in Canberra.

AIATSIS has also digitised the *Dawn* and *New Dawn* magazine – printed by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board from 1935 to 1965. It contains a valuable photographic record for New South Wales Aboriginal people. All issues are available online and it is indexed in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index (ABI).



<http://aiatsis.gov.au/publications/products/dawn-and-new-dawn-1952-1975-mazagine-aboriginal-people-new-south-wales>

Tindale collection – South Australian Museum

Photographs of Aboriginal people make up a significant part of the Tindale collection held by the South Australian Museum. See Sources: Tindale genealogies for more information on where to access them.

Trove – National Library of Australia

Other collections of photographs of Aboriginal people are held in institutions such as the National Archives of Australia, state archives, the National Library of Australia, state libraries, museums and local historical societies.

You can search for images in many Australian and overseas collections through [Trove pictures, photos, objects](#).

Use search terms such as ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Aborigine’ combined with a place name (for example, ‘Aboriginal Dubbo’) or search using a mission, reserve or station name (for example, ‘Ernabella’). You are less likely to find relevant photographs searching by people’s names.

Offensive language

Libraries, museums and archives collect material that may contain offensive and racist language in the captions. Historical photographs themselves may be offensive – some photographers used offensive backdrops and put people into costumes that fit current stereotypes. At the same time, posing for such photographs might have provided people with valuable goods as payment such as food or tobacco.





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Sources – birth, death and marriage records

Births, deaths and marriages form a chain linking one generation of your family to the next and one branch of your family to another. You can use the BDM information you find to follow these links back through your family tree.

Realistically, you will probably spend a significant amount of time tracking down BDM records as you do your family history research.

Australian government BDM records are indexed, which means you can search by name, place and date. Working backwards from yourself, you should think of all the family names you know, the year your family members were born, married or died and where they were from.

Three types of BDMs

There are two main types of 'mainstream' BDM records: **civil registrations** (which are government records) and **parish registers** (which are church records).

Information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander births, deaths and marriages, however, may have been recorded differently. For example,

- In the Northern Territory nearly all Aboriginal people were named in a Register of Aboriginal Wards published in the *Northern Territory Government Gazette*, no. 1913, on 13 May 1957. It recorded place of residence, tribal and language groups and dates of births and deaths. A copy is now held by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages in Darwin.
- Aborigines protection and welfare boards recorded Aboriginal births, deaths and marriages of people who were defined as 'Aborigines' and 'supervised' by the board.
- Church bodies that managed missions and other institutions recorded BDM information about inmates. Some, like the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM), published newsletters which announced births, deaths and marriages.

When doing Indigenous family history research it is important to search both mainstream sources of BDM information and Aboriginal-specific sources.

What information will you find on BDM certificates?

BDM certificates can provide a wealth of information beyond just dates and places of birth, death and marriage. They often include addresses, names of witnesses who might be family members or friends, maiden names or former married names of women, occupations and religions.

However, the information found on certificates varies. Earlier records are likely to have less information. Some states collected more information than others.



Parish records might have extra information, such as your ancestor's original signature.

Information you might find on birth, death or marriage certificates

Birth certificate:	Marriage certificate:	Death certificate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surname • Given name of the child • Date of birth • Place of birth • Sex • Father's name • Occupation • Mother's name • Mother's maiden name • Ages • Other children of the union • Place of residence • Registration number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Names of the bride and groom • Bride's maiden and former name/s • Their occupations • Usual place of residence • Where they were born • Any previous marriages • Names of their parents • Registration number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of deceased • Sex • Date of death • Cause of death • Place of death • Age • Occupation • Residence • Place of birth • Place of marriage • Name of spouse • Children of the union • Where buried • Who the informant was • Registration number

Points to remember

- Information is only as reliable as the source. The informant on a death certificate may, for example, have hardly known the deceased person.
- Be mindful of spelling variations as people often recorded information as it sounded and in earlier times not many people could read and write.
- Try to double-check information on certificates with other records such as cemetery inscriptions or a family Bible.
- A marriage certificate may give details of the parents of each spouse, and is the most reliable certificate for information as both parties were present at the event and could give the information.
- Birth, death and marriage certificates will sometimes include statements as to Aboriginality, especially in earlier records.
- Births, deaths and marriages of Aboriginal people were often not registered. This was due, in part, to legal restrictions such as the Queensland *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts 1901*, which prohibited the marriage of Aboriginal women to non-Aboriginal men without the express permission of the government.



- Births of Indigenous children were not often registered in order to protect them from removal policies. Large number of Indigenous people worked on pastoral stations where events were recorded in station papers, diaries and resources rather than in the standard birth death and marriage registrations.
- Sometimes you will see the word 'native' on a birth, death or marriage certificate. This may or may not mean that the person was Indigenous.

How far back do BDM records go?

Compulsory civil registration of births, deaths and marriages was introduced in Australia in the middle of the 19th century. This meant that people were required by law to register these events with government authorities. Despite this, events were sometimes not registered, particularly in remote and rural areas.

In the early days of Australian colonisation the churches alone were responsible for recording baptisms, weddings and burials within their jurisdictions. These records are known as 'early church records' or 'parish registers'. Churches also continued to record events in parish registers after civil registration was introduced.

Government registries have tried to combine the information in early parish registers into the civil registration indexes where possible. If you don't find a registration in the indexes, think about what religion your ancestor might have been to and check if parish registers exist.

Year that civil registration of births, deaths and marriages began

- New South Wales 1856
- Victoria 1853
- Queensland 1856 (as New South Wales)
- Western Australia 1841
- South Australia 1842
- Tasmania 1838
- Northern Territory 1870 (formerly South Australia)
- Australian Capital Territory 1930 (formerly New South Wales)

Searching for historical BDM registrations

Some of the historical Australian BDM records have been indexed, meaning that you can search for BDM certificates by name, place and date. Anyone can use the BDM indexes.

You can do online name searches of historical BDMs for the following states:

- [New South Wales \(or search for 'NSW BDM'\)](#)



- Northern Territory – no online access
- [Victoria \(or search for 'Victoria BDM'\)](#)
- [Queensland \(or search for 'Queensland BDM'\)](#)
- [Western Australia \(or search for 'WA BDM'\)](#)
- [South Australia \(or search for 'SA BDM'\)](#)
- [Tasmania \(or search for 'Tasmania BDM'\)](#)

You can also access some BDM indexes through [ancestry.com](#) and Family Search.

Many libraries and family history societies have copies of BDM indexes on CD-ROM and/or microfiche.

If you are having trouble finding particular information using the online indexes, try those on CD-ROM. Although not as simple to use as the online indexes, you can do more complicated searches in the CD-ROM databases. This is useful if you only have limited information, for example, if you are looking for the birth of a child and you only know the mother's given name and an approximate year of birth.

Remember you can ask your local librarian or family history society staff for help. Some of the BDM registries also provide specialised services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Are all BDMs available?

Open period BDMs. Anyone can apply for copies of historical certificates. These are considered 'open'. The table below shows the open periods by state and territory. Note that they are all different!

Closed period BDMs. But there are concerns about privacy and identity theft for more recent BDM events. These are considered 'closed'.

What historical BDMs are available (years ago by state from 2016)

State	Birth	Marriage	Death
New South Wales	100 years ago	50 years ago	30 years ago
Queensland	100 (1829-1916)	75 (1829-1941)	35 (1829-1984)
Northern Territory	1870-1918	1870-1913	1870-1913
South Australia	100	75	30
Victoria	100	60	10
Tasmania	100	75	25
Western Australia	100	75	30
Australian Capital Territory	100	75	30



Access policies

Each BDM authority has rules about the availability of its records to the public. There are also rules about when you need to show permission from the person named in the certificate or show proof of your relationship to them (for example, your parents, children or grandparents).

- Australian Capital Territory:
<https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/ci/fattach/get/48385/1436744378/redirect/1/filename/Births%20deaths%20and%20marriages%20certificate%20access%20policy.pdf>
- New South Wales: <http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/Pages/family-history/family-history.aspx>
- Northern Territory:
http://www.nt.gov.au/justice/bdm/births_deaths_marriages/other/regaccess.shtml
- Queensland: <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/family-history-research/information-and-how-to-access-and-order-records/information-you-can-access/>
- South Australia: <http://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/births-deaths-marriages/bdm-other-topics/access-policy/>
- Tasmania: http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm/access_policy
- Victoria: <http://www.bdm.vic.gov.au/utility/about+bdm/legislation+and+policies/access+policy/>
- Western Australia
 - birth: http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/B/birth_certificate_access_policy.aspx
 - marriage:
http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/M/marriage_certificate_access_policy.aspx?uid=3805-2981-7860-8859
 - death:
http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/D/death_certificate_access_policy.aspx?uid=8783-7027-4626-4788

Where to get copies of BDM certificates

Each state and territory in Australia has a registry of births, deaths and marriages. You can apply to the registry for official copies of certificates, or use a transcription service where this is available (in New South Wales and South Australia only).

New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia have specialised services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people find and get access to BDM and other information held in these archives about people known to be Indigenous.



New South Wales Family Records Unit – Aboriginal Affairs

The Family Records Unit at Aboriginal Affairs helps people from New South Wales access state government records about themselves and their family. They also give researchers permission to access Aborigines Protection Board and Aborigines Welfare Board records.

Level 13, Tower B, Centennial Plaza, 300 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Free call: 1800 019 998

Ph: 02 9219 0700

Fax: 02 9219 0790

Email: familyhistory@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/about/family-records-unit/

New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (NSW)

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has records of birth, death and marriage in New South Wales from 1856, as well as some earlier church records. You can search family history indexes online. If you need to contact the registry you can request that an Indigenous staff member handle your inquiry.

35 Regent Street, Chippendale NSW 2008

GPO Box 30, Sydney NSW 2001

Ph: 13 77 88

Email: bdm-familyhistory@agd.nsw.gov.au (for questions about family history searches)

Web: www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/Pages/family-history/family-history (Family history)

www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/Pages/contact-us/aboriginal (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services)

Northern Territory Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages holds records about the births, deaths and marriages of people in the Northern Territory. The Aboriginal Population Register is also held there – this is a collection of genealogical information about Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory taken primarily from Census information dating back to the 1950s. The register was inherited from the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Email: AGD.RegistrarGeneral@nt.gov.au

Web: www.nt.gov.au/justice/bdm/index

Darwin office

Ground Floor, Nichols Place, Cnr Cavenagh and Bennett Streets, Darwin NT 0800

GPO Box 3021, Darwin NT 0801

Ph: 08 8999 6119
Fax: 08 8999 6324

Alice Springs office
Centrepont Building, Cnr Gregory and Hartley Streets, Alice Springs NT 0870
PO Box 8043, Alice Springs NT 0871
Ph: 08 8951 5339

Tennant Creek office
Tennant Creek Courthouse, Paterson Street, Tennant Creek NT 0860
PO Box 84, Tennant Creek NT 0861
Ph: 08 8962 4377
Fax: 08 8962 4375

Queensland

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships – Community and Personal Histories

The Community and Personal Histories team can help you use Queensland state government records to research your family and personal history. If you or your family were born in Queensland, they may be able to help you with other information, such as proving your birth date.

Level 6A, Neville Bonner Building, 75 William Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
PO Box 15397, City East QLD 4002
Free call: 1800 650 230

Email: enquiries@datsip.qld.gov.au

Online form: www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/family-history-request-form/index.html

Web: www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-family-history

Queensland

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has records of birth, death and marriage in Queensland from 1856, as well as some earlier church records. You can search and access historical birth, death and marriage records online.

110 George Street, Brisbane QLD 4000
PO Box 15188, City East QLD 4002
Free call: 1300 366 430

Email: bdm-mail@justice.qld.gov.au

Web: www.qld.gov.au/law/births-deaths-marriages-and-divorces/family-history-research

South Australia

Births, Deaths & Marriages Registration Office – Office of Consumer and Business Affairs

The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Office is responsible for maintaining registers of births, deaths and marriages. You can apply for certificates online but only if you already know the details.

You can access the South Australian BDM indexes on CD-ROM at the State Library of South Australia and other libraries around Australia.

Genealogy SA has published extracts from the South Australian BDM indexes online at www.genealogysa.org.au/resources/online-databases.html

Level 2, Chesser House, 91–97 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1351, Adelaide SA 5001

Ph: 131 882

Web: www.cbs.sa.gov.au/wcm/births-deaths-marriages/bdm-other-topics/family-history

Tasmania

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Registration of births, deaths and marriages commenced in 1839 in Tasmania, the first Australian colony to take over the function previously conducted by the churches. The registry holds church records (burials, baptisms and marriages) from 1803 to 1839, and birth, death and marriage registrations from 1839 to the present day.

The Tasmanian Names Index provides access to historical Tasmanian birth, death and marriage records online.

Apply in person for birth, death and marriage certificates at Service Tasmania shops around the state

GPO Box 198, Hobart TAS 7001

Free call: 1300 135 513

Ph: 03 616 53457

Fax: 03 6233 6444

Email: bdm@justice.tas.gov.au

Web: www.justice.tas.gov.au/bdm/family_history

linctas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/ (Tasmanian Name Index)

Victoria

Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria

Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria has records of birth, death and marriage in Victoria from 1853, as well as some earlier church records. You can search and access historical birth, death and marriage records online.



The Koori Access Team at Births, Deaths and Marriages Victoria can help you apply and pay for Victorian birth, death and marriage certificates if you are a Koori, Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and you hold a pension concession card or health care card.

Ground floor, 595 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3001

GPO Box 5220, Melbourne VIC 3001

Free call: 1300 369 367 (General and family history inquiries)

Ph: 03 9613 5103 (Koori Access Team)

Email: vicbdm@justice.vic.gov.au (General and family history inquiries)

BDMIndigenousAccess@justice.vic.gov.au (Koori Access Team)

Web: www.bdm.vic.gov.au/home/family+history (Family history)

www.bdm.vic.gov.au/home/koori+services (Koori services)

Western Australia

Aboriginal History Research Unit – Department of Aboriginal Affairs

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal History Research Unit manages access to Western Australian state archives and some privately owned records. You can apply as a personal or family history applicants for your own records or those of your ancestors. You can apply for any records relating to you held by the department, or those relating to a specific purpose such as evidence of genealogy, dates and place of birth or a specific ancestor.

151 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004

PO Box 3153, East Perth WA 6892

Free call: 1300 651 077

Fax: 08 6551 8088

Email: ahru@daa.wa.gov.au

Web: www.daa.wa.gov.au/community-development/ahru

Western Australia

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has records of births, deaths and marriages in Western Australian from 1841. You can search historical indexes online for free.

Westralia Square, Level 10, 141 St Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000

PO Box 7720, Cloisters Square, Perth WA 6850

Free call: 1300 305 021

Ph: 08 9264 1555

Fax: 08 9264 1599

Web: www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au



Transcription services

Transcriptions provide the same information as certificates and are usually cheaper and quicker, but can't be used for legal purposes. Ask the BDM registry if there are any transcription services in the state.

What if you can't find BDM records?

It may be difficult to find BDMs for family members. Some common reasons are:

- the registration name was spelled differently from the one you searched for
- the registration name was different from the name the person was usually known by
- the birth was registered under the mother's maiden name
- the registration name was a nickname or alias
- the event was never registered, due to reasons such as distance, suspicion of the system, and natural events like floods or fires
- the event was registered in an unexpected place – for example, the person was born at one place but registered in a different town
- information provided at registration was incorrect, either deliberately (for example, to hide illegitimacy or under-age marriage) or because the correct information wasn't known
- information recorded at registration was incorrect because the registrar misheard, misspelled or misinterpreted the information told to them
- a keyboard error or an error in interpreting the original handwriting was made when the index was compiled
- the event is outside the open period for access to BDM records.

What you can do

You can try to find other records for birth, death and marriage information, for example:

- BDM certificates of other people in the family, such as brothers and sisters of the person you're researching
- Trove digitised newspapers – birth, baptism, death, marriage, funeral and in memoriam notices for family members; reports on inquests, divorces, etc.
- Mission records – especially registers of baptisms, marriages, births and deaths
- 'Protection' and welfare records – letters, reports, censuses, diaries, records of children in training institutions



- Tindale genealogies or other ethnographical or anthropological collections
- War service records
- Divorce records
- Cemetery records
- Inquest records
- Electoral rolls
- Census records
- Family Bible

See [CoraWeb – Birth, death and marriage records: Australia](#) for more ideas.



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Sources – burial and cemetery records

Cemetery records can provide information about deaths, and can be useful when you can't find a death certificate. They might provide other information about the deceased person and their immediate family, too.

What are cemetery records?

Two types of cemetery records – **burial records** and **headstone inscriptions** – record information about people who have died.

Burial records are records of the actual burial event. They vary in the amount of information they provide, but might contain:

- the name of the person who died
- their age at time of death
- the date of their death and/or burial
- where they lived
- who performed the ceremony and the name of the undertaker
- their religion
- the location of their grave in the cemetery
- names of other people buried in the same grave
- a transcription of the inscription on the headstone.

Burial records list all burials in a cemetery, even when there isn't a headstone or plaque.

Headstone inscriptions are the words found in cemeteries on plaques, headstones and at gravesites. They often provide useful information not found elsewhere, particularly for early deaths where written records don't exist or contain little detail.

You will not always find a headstone on a grave. Many people were buried in unmarked graves, and old headstones have often weathered, been destroyed or are hard to read. In this case you might be able to find information from registers published by local family history societies.

A number of 'lonely graves' projects around Australia are documenting graves that are outside recognised cemeteries, such as those on rural properties. Do an online search for 'lonely graves' to find information about the various projects.



Other death records you might also check are death notices, funeral notices, obituaries and in memoriam notices published in newspapers, and wills and probate records. Mission records might also contain information about Aboriginal people who died or were buried there.

What information do you need to look for cemetery records?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person
- their place of death.

It can also be helpful to know:

- their place of burial, which is usually given on their death certificate.

If you don't know where the person died or is buried, you might find this information by:

- looking at electoral rolls just before their death to find out their address or that of their children – it's likely they were buried in a cemetery nearby
- searching historical newspapers in Trove for a death or funeral notice, which might give a place of burial.

Where do you find cemetery records?

Burial and cemetery records are kept by cemetery trusts, church authorities and local councils.

Many of these records have been published and can be searched online or at your local library, state library or family history society. Sometimes transcriptions or photographs of headstones are also available online, but often you will need to visit the cemetery itself.

- [Australian Cemeteries Index](#)
- [National Library of Australia – Australian cemetery records](#)
- [CoraWeb – Cemeteries](#)
- [State Library of NSW – Deaths and burials](#)
- [State Library of Victoria – Cemetery records](#)
- [State Library of Queensland – Cemetery records](#)
- [State Library of SA – SA deaths](#)
- [State Library of WA – Aboriginal family history: Deaths and burials](#)
- [LINC Tasmania – Cemetery records](#)



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Family History Unit

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Email: familyhistory@aiatsis.gov.au

Records about adoption, fostering and institutions

Governments, churches and welfare bodies removed Indigenous children from their families from the first days of British colonisation. These children may have been adopted, fostered out to white families or brought up in institutions.

The institutions included both 'mainstream' and those exclusively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Some were dormitory schools within missions (run by religious groups) or stations (run by governments).

Why were Indigenous children sent to both types of institutions?

At different times in some states and territories until the 1960s governments followed 'assimilation' policies to remove children from their Indigenous families and raise them to become white Australians.

- Some Indigenous children were administered under Aboriginal protection and welfare laws and sent to segregated Indigenous institutions.
- If Indigenous children were quite 'fair' and looked non-Indigenous they were adopted, fostered or institutionalised under mainstream child welfare legislation and sent to mainstream institutions.

By the 1970s Aboriginal protection and welfare legislation was repealed, segregated institutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were closed, and Indigenous children were adopted, fostered or institutionalised under mainstream child welfare law.

The key point for family history research is that there were separate bureaucracies with different ways of keeping records about children in care.

Access to records is limited to protect privacy

Records about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care are very personal and subject to strict access conditions to protect their privacy. This includes access to historical records and access to name indexes.

Generally you can access records about yourself or very close relatives depending on the age of the records and your relationship to the person.

All state and territories have special teams that assist people to access their records.



Contact information

[Where to get help](#) has comprehensive contact information for accessing records in each state and territory.

Stolen Generations

Since the Bringing Them Home report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children removed from their families (1995), Australian governments have created special teams to assist people to get access to their records and special indexes that make these records easier to find.

Link-Up services have been established in most states and territories to assist Stolen Generations. See: [Stolen Generations](#) for more information.

Contact information

[Link-Up services](#) has comprehensive contact information for Link-Ups in each state and territory.

Forgotten Australians

In 2004 a Senate inquiry was completed on Australians who experienced institutional or out of home care as children – now known as the ‘Forgotten Australians’. The [Find & Connect](#) web resource was developed to provide information about children’s homes – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

The site has short histories of each institution and information about where to find the records of children who lived there. Find & Connect was set up to help people who were in out-of-home ‘care’ as children learn more about their histories and to locate and access their personal records. You can:

- find non-government institutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- trace the history of institutions that started as missions and were taken over by governments
- trace the name changes of institutions over time.
- read information about and view images of children’s homes
- get help to find records about your childhood in ‘care’
- connect with support groups and services in your state/territory.



No personal information or private records are shown on the Find & Connect website.

To find Find & Connect resources specifically about Aboriginal people, [search the site](#) using the term 'Aboriginal'. You can then limit the results by state or time period.

For more information about the records and accessing them, see [Find & Connect – Information about records](#).





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Sources – newspapers

Historical newspapers are a very valuable source for family history. Australian newspapers, especially local and country newspapers, published lots of material about individuals and families in their area.

Newspapers often contain information about people that you can't find anywhere else.

The sorts of information you might find includes births, deaths, funerals, marriages, obituaries, inquests, court cases, social events, church activities, sporting events, legal notices, land sales, advertisements for businesses and military service.

Many researchers find material in newspapers that help them flesh out their family histories, making them more than just lists of names and dates.

While you are more likely to find non-Indigenous people in newspapers, this can be particularly useful when families include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The State Library of Queensland has produced an excellent online guide *Newspapers: family history info guide* (www.slq.qld.gov.au/resources/family-history/newspapers).

Trove digitised newspapers

The National Library of Australia provides free access to digitised copies of historical newspapers through [Trove Digitised Newspapers](#). More than 180 million newspaper articles are available!

You can search Trove Digitised Newspapers using keywords like your ancestor's name and the place they lived. You can limit your search in various ways – by date, state, newspaper or article type.

Here are some tips for searching:

- When you search for a name, add a place name to your search. Searching for both a person's name and place at once might bring up more relevant results. Also try variations of the person's name (surname, given name, full name, different spellings).
- Try searching using both your ancestor's name and the term 'Aboriginal' or 'Aborigine' – for example, 'Tommy' and 'Aborigine'. Newspapers often referred to Aboriginal people by their first names only or by nicknames, using phrases like 'Tommy, an aborigine' or 'the aboriginal Tommy'.



- Try searching using both the name of place your family lived and the term 'Aboriginal' or 'Aborigine' – for example, 'Bega' and 'Aborigine'. Many newspapers reported in general terms about Aboriginal people, rather than using names of individual people.
- Remember that historical newspapers often reflect the racist attitudes of the white people who wrote and published them. You might find your ancestors described using words that are offensive, or you might find out distressing personal details about your ancestors and their lives.

Read more about using Trove Digitised Newspapers:

- [Using Trove: Digitised newspapers](#)
- [Using Trove: Searching in newspapers](#)
- [Trove tips for family historians](#)

The National Library is continually adding more digitised newspapers to Trove, but not all historical newspapers are available yet. See this [list of available newspaper titles](#). Read on for ideas about accessing newspapers that aren't available in Trove.

Hard copy newspapers

For newspapers that aren't digitised in Trove, you will need to visit a library that has original hard copies or microfilm copies. This research can be difficult and time consuming unless you have a specific date and event to look for.

Some newspaper indexes are available, but they probably won't include the sorts of terms you would want to look up.

State libraries are the best place to look for newspapers that aren't available in Trove. Copies of suburban or country newspapers might also be held by the local public library, historical society or museum.

- [National Library of Australia: Newspapers](#)
- [State Library of New South Wales: Newspapers](#)
- [State Library of Victoria: How to find newspapers](#)
- [State Library of Queensland: Newspapers](#)
- [State Library of South Australia: Newspapers](#) and [Fact sheet: newspapers](#)
- [State Library of Western Australia: WA newspapers](#)
- [LINC Tasmania: Tasmanian newspapers](#)
- [Northern Territory Library: Northern Territory newspapers](#)
- [ACT Heritage Library: Newspaper holdings](#)



Aboriginal newspapers

Newspapers and magazines published by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people might be of interest. The following publications are digitised and available online:

- [The Australian Abo Call](#), published by the Aborigines Progressive Association in 1938 (Trove)
- [Dawn and New Dawn](#), published by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board from 1952 to 1975 (AIATSIS)
- [Koori Mail](#), digitised copies are available for issues published from 1991 to 2011 (AIATSIS).
- The [Australian Indigenous Index](#) (InfoKoori) from the State Library of NSW is an index to the *Koori Mail*. It is also an index to biographical information from various magazines including: *Our Aim* (1907–1961), *Dawn* (1952–1969), *New Dawn* (1970–1975) and *Identity* (1971–1982).

AIATSIS has an extensive collection of Aboriginal newsletters and newspapers. Some were published over many years, some only lasted a few years.





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Sources – Tindale genealogies

The South Australian Museum has a large and important collection of photographs of Aboriginal people, together with accompanying genealogies. Many of these are the work of Norman Tindale from the 1930s to 1950s. Anthropological collections like the Tindale collection provide genealogical information about Aboriginal families.

What are the Tindale genealogies?

Norman Tindale was an anthropologist based at the South Australian Museum. He recorded vast amounts of genealogical information about Indigenous communities from all over Australia, the majority being collected during the 1920s and 1930s.

Over 50,000 Indigenous people are included in the genealogies, as well as thousands of named photographic portraits.

The genealogies are charted in hand-written field notes, usually with one extended family included on each chart. Some charts trace families back as far as 1860 and sometimes include the language groups and/or traditional names of people.

WARNING: Tindale was very interested in 'caste', the 'admixture of Aboriginal and European blood', and therefore his notes contain racist and offensive language.

What information do you need to search the genealogies?

To protect the privacy of the people whose personal information was recorded by Tindale, access to the Tindale genealogies is limited. Usually only direct descendants and persons with permission from families or communities can view and copy the genealogies.

To start searching you need to know:

- the place your family came from or where they lived
- the name of the person or people you are researching.

Where do you find the Tindale genealogies?

The entire Tindale archive, which includes the genealogies, is available from the South Australian Museum. Various state and community organisations also have relevant copies of the genealogies.



All of Australia

The **South Australian Museum** is the custodian of the complete Tindale collection. It holds material about families and communities all around Australia – individual places are listed under the states below. You will need to make an appointment with the museum's Family and Community History Consultant to view the material.

- [Overview of the Tindale collection](#)
- [Online gallery](#) of examples from the Tindale collection
- Detailed [finding aid to the Tindale collection](#)
- Contact details for the SA Museum [Family and Community History Consultant](#)

New South Wales

The **State Library of New South Wales** has copies of genealogical charts and photographs from nine NSW communities, mostly collected through 1938. These include Boggabilla, Brewarrina, Cummeragunga, Kempsey, Menindee, Pilliga, Walgett, Wallaga Lake and Woodenbong. Check the [Index to the NSW Tindale Genealogies \(pdf, 196.22kb\)](#) before making an appointment with one of the library's [Indigenous services librarians](#). See the [SLNSW website](#) for more information.

Muda Aboriginal Corporation holds copies of genealogies for Brewarrina only.

[Dhiyaan Indigenous Centre](#) in Moree holds copies of genealogies for all of New South Wales (Cnr Balo & Albert Streets, Moree NSW 2400, Ph: (02) 6757 3374).

Northern Territory

Tindale collected genealogies from Aboriginal people in the following places in the Northern Territory: Cockatoo Creek, Granites and Mount Leibig. They are held by the South Australian Museum. See *All of Australia* above.

Queensland

The **State Library of Queensland** has copies of genealogical information and photographs for the Queensland Aboriginal communities of Yarrabah, Cherbourg, Mona Mona, Palm Island, Woorabinda, Bentinck Island, Doomadgee and Mornington Island, as well as two northern New South Wales communities at Boggabilla and Woodenbong. You can search the library's [Normal Tindale Collection Alphabetical Index](#) (pdf, 1.55mb). See the [SLQ website](#) for more information.

Townsville CityLibraries Indigenous Services holds copies of Tindale genealogies for Queensland. See the [CityLibraries website](#) for more information.

South Australia



Tindale collected genealogies from Aboriginal people in the following places in South Australia: Koonibba, Macumba, Mirramitta, Nullabor, Pandi Pandi, Point McLeay, Point Pearce, Port Augusta and Swan Reach. They are held by the South Australian Museum. See *All of Australia* above.

Tasmania

Tindale collected genealogies from Aboriginal people in Cape Barren Island in Tasmania. The [Riawunna Aboriginal Education Centre](#) at the University of Tasmania holds copies (Ph: (03) 6226 2772).

Victoria

Tindale collected genealogies from Aboriginal people in Lake Tyers in Victoria. They are held by the South Australian Museum. See *All of Australia* above.

Western Australia

The **Aboriginal History Research Unit in the WA Department of Aboriginal Affairs** holds copies of the Tindale genealogies, photographs and journals, as well as other anthropological records relating to Aboriginal people in Western Australia. See the [Department of Aboriginal Affairs](#) website for more information.

Tindale collected genealogies from Aboriginal people in the following places in Western Australia: Albany, Balgo, Borden, Broome, Christmas Creek, Collie, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Forrest River, Gnowrangerup, Gogo, Gordon Downs, Inverway, Jigalong, Laverton, Leopold, Liveringa, Margaret River, Meda, Moola Boola, Moore River, Mount Barker, Noonkanbah, Norseman, Quanbun, Southern Cross, Sturt Creek, Wiluna and Wotjulum.





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Sources – military service records

Indigenous people have served in every military conflict that Australia has been involved in since the Boer War (1899–1902). Military records are a rich source of information about the men and women who served in the armed forces, and sometimes their family members.

What are military records?

Military records were created by the Australian Army, Navy, Air Force and Department of Defence. They were created for management and administration purposes.

The most useful military record for family history is the personal service record or file. These files document an individual's military career. Often this is the only official documentation about a person who served in the armed forces. The contents and detail of service records varies with each conflict.

What information do you need to look for military records?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person who served in the Australian armed forces.

It's also helpful to know:

- the person's date and place of birth
- when the person served – Boer War, World War I, World War II, Vietnam and so on.

To take your research further you might need to know information such as the person's service number and unit name – you can find this information in their service record.

Where do you find military records?

Two national government agencies, located in Canberra, hold most of the records on Australian service men and women:

- National Archives of Australia
- Australian War Memorial.

State archives also have records from before Federation (1901) relating to the Boer War.

See this [overview of service records](#) from the Department of Defence for a quick guide to where records are held – for both current and ex-serving members.



Family history websites like Ancestry and Find My Past provide access to some military records, but nothing that you can't also access through the National Archives, Australian War Memorial or state archives.

National Archives of Australia

The National Archives of Australia holds personal service records of people who served in the Australian defence forces in conflicts since 1901.

These records usually include information like place of enlistment, address, age, next of kin and the person's service history including dates and places of service and medical information. Some files have physical descriptions and/or photographs.

Some files note that the person was Indigenous but others don't – some people didn't identify themselves as Indigenous when they joined up.

The National Archives also holds other records relating to military service, including courts-martial, civilian service, munitions workers and soldier settlement.

Records in the National Archives are available to the public if the records are more than 20 years old, called 'the open period'. Many are available online.

For more information see:

- [Finding defence service records](#) – read an overview from the National Archives' *Tracking Family* guide
- [Service records](#) – learn more about military service records
- [Discovering Anzacs](#) – search this website for records about your service person (World War I and the Boer War)
- [RecordSearch](#) – search the National Archives collection database for records about your service person (all conflicts).

Australian War Memorial

The Australian War Memorial maintains a set of searchable lists called 'rolls' which are names of service persons in the following categories:

- Roll of Honour – names of service persons who died on active service
- Commemorative Roll – names of people who were not in the defence forces but who died during or as a result of war
- Nominal rolls
 - Conflicts before World War I
 - World War I Embarkation Roll – recorded as defence persons left for overseas



- World War I Nominal Roll – recorded when service persons received repatriation assistance
- Honours and awards – details of military honours
- Honours and awards – details of recommendations
- Red Cross wounded and missing
- Prisoners of war
- Australian Naval Force 1903 to 1911.

For more information see:

- [Search for a person](#) – search the rolls for your ancestor's name
- [People profiles: Indigenous service](#) – a list of 940 known Indigenous service persons
- [Family history](#) – learn more about how to research your family member's military service.

You can find out more about what your family member did in the armed services by looking at other records held by the War Memorial. For example, war diaries recorded the daily activities of Australian Army units and can provide more details about your family member's movements during the war. To read war diaries and other records online, see the War Memorial web page about [Digitised records](#).

Other resources

Online

These online resources provide information about men and women who served in the Australian armed forces. Some of the resources focus specifically on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[Indigenous Australian servicemen](#) (Australian War Memorial) – an overview of the history of Indigenous service

['All in' – Indigenous service](#) (Department of Veterans Affairs) – a website about World War II and the people who served

[Mura® catalogue](#) (AIATSIS) – search for 'WW1', 'WW2', 'Vietnam' or other conflicts for material on Indigenous service persons

[Cemeteries](#) (Department of Veterans Affairs) – information about locating the burial place of a service person

[First AIF database](#) (University of NSW) – an online database containing the details of 330,000 men and women who served in the first Australian Imperial Force, 1914–1918

[World War II nominal roll](#) (Department of Veterans Affairs) – a database with information from the service records of the more than one million persons who served during World War II

[Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers of the First World War](#) (pdf 2.9MB) – a list of Indigenous people who enlisted, produced by the *Kurbingui Star*

[Bombing of Darwin roll of honour](#) (Northern Territory Library) – a roll of honour that focuses on people, including Aboriginal people, who died on 19 February 1942

[Military records on CoraWeb](#) – a website with links for family history research

Books

These books talk about the involvement of Indigenous people in war. Many of them include stories and accounts of specific Indigenous Australians. Your local library might have them or be able to order them for you on interlibrary loan.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Volunteers for the AIF by Philippa Scarlett (Macquarie ACT: Indigenous Histories, 2011)

Aborigines in the Defence of Australia edited by Desmond Ball (Sydney: Australian National University Press, 1991)

Biographical Register of Queensland Aborigines Who Served in the Great War, 1914-1918 compiled by Rod Pratt (Wynnum: Rod Pratt, 1993)

Defending Whose Country? Indigenous soldiers in the Pacific war by Noah Riseman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012)

Fighters From the Fringe: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Recall the Second World War by Robert Hall (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies, 1995)

Forever Warriors: This book honours all Western Australian Indigenous men and women who served in all conflicts by Jan Kabarli James (Northam WA 2010)

Forgotten Heroes: Aborigines at War from the Somme to Vietnam by Alick Jackomos (South Melbourne: Victoria Press, 1993)

The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War by Robert Hall (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989)





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Sources – mission and reserve records

Missions, reserves and stations were reserves of land to which Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated.

- **Missions** were in the control of churches and missionaries with little or no government involvement.
- **Reserves and stations** were generally run by the government, although churches, especially the United Aborigines Mission and the Aborigines Inland Mission, were sometimes active on government settlements although they didn't always have an administrative role. Aboriginal reserves were overseen by government 'protectors', who controlled many aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people.

The types of records that remain vary. They might include diaries, daily occurrence books, photographs taken by visitors and resident missionaries, letters between church officials and people working on the church settlements, and registers of Aboriginal children and adults living there. Some missionaries recorded local languages and culture, and described daily life. Churches also published magazines and newspapers that included information about missions and church institutions.

Mission and reserve records can best be described as patchy. Of the many Aboriginal missions and reserves that were established, some still exist but many have disappeared. Records that remain are usually held by the church or in state archives. Records relating to one mission may be split between church bodies and government bodies.

See AIATSIS subject guide: [How to find mission and reserve records](#) (has a comprehensive list of AIATSIS holdings on missions and reserves).

Find & Connect

The [Find & Connect](#) web resource includes a lot of information about missions where Aboriginal children lived. Find & Connect lists records relating to the missions, and who to contact to get access to the records. You can search or browse on their [Look for homes](#) page.

Search AIATSIS or National Library

A lot of research has been done into Aboriginal missions and reserves. You can read the histories of the particular mission or reserve where your family lived. Understanding the history of Aboriginal missions more generally, can help you understand what your family members' lives were like and might provide further clues. Most of mission/reserve histories will also list sources and locations of records.



Search the [AIATSIS Mura catalogue](#) or [Trove](#) using the mission name or the word 'mission' and the name of the relevant state.

What information do you need to look for mission records?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person
- the name or at least the general location of the mission, reserve or station they lived on.

It's also helpful to know:

- other personal details such as dates and place of birth, marriage and death
- the name of the government or church body that managed the mission, reserve or station.

Where do you find the records?

Aboriginal records units in most states and territories can help you with locating mission and reserve records about you and your close family. These units are mostly within state government departments of Aboriginal affairs and specialise in locating personal records.

New South Wales Family Records Unit – Aboriginal Affairs

Level 13, Tower B, Centennial Plaza, 300 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Free call: 1800 019 998

Ph: 02 9219 0700

Fax: 02 9219 0790

Email: familyhistory@aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/about/family-records-unit/

Northern Territory Archives Service

Northern Territory Archives Centre, Kelsey Crescent, Millner NT 0810

GPO Box 874, Darwin NT 0801

Ph: 08 8924 7677

Fax: 08 8924 7660

Email: ntac@nt.gov.au

Web: www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas (Northern Territory Archives Service)

www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas/research/protocol (Protocol for Aboriginal family history research)

www.artsandmuseums.nt.gov.au/ntas/media/pdf/ATSI-Family-History_Oct2012.pdf (Fact sheet on Aboriginal family history research)

Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships – Community and Personal Histories

Level 6A, Neville Bonner Building, 75 William Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

PO Box 15397, City East QLD 4002

Free call: 1800 650 230

Email: enquiries@datsip.qld.gov.au

Online form: www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/family-history-request-form/index.html

Web: www.datsip.qld.gov.au/people-communities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-family-history

State Records of South Australia – Aboriginal Access team

State Records Research Centre (in the State Library of South Australia building), Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue, Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 464, Adelaide SA 5001

Ph: 08 8204 8767 or 08 8204 8791

Fax: 08 8204 8777

Online form: www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/contact-us-form

Email: srsaAboriginalServices@sa.gov.au

Web: www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/aboriginal-services (Aboriginal services)

www.archives.sa.gov.au/content/family-history (Family history)

LINC Tasmania

2nd Floor, 91 Murray Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Ph: 03 6165 5538

Online form: <http://sltas.altarama.com/reft100.aspx?key=Research>

Web: www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/guides-records/Pages/Aboriginal.aspx (Aboriginal family history)

www.linc.tas.gov.au

Public Record Office Victoria – Koorie Records Unit

Victorian Archives Centre, 99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne VIC 3051

PO Box 2100, North Melbourne VIC 3051

Free call: 1800 657 452

Ph: 03 9348 5735

Fax: 03 9348 5656

Email: koorie.records@prov.vic.gov.au

Online form: prov.altarama.com/reft100.aspx

Web: prov.vic.gov.au/community-programs/koorie-records-unit
prov.vic.gov.au/publications/finding-your-mob

Aboriginal History Research Unit – Department of Aboriginal Affairs

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs Aboriginal History Research Unit manages access to Western Australian state archives and some privately owned records. You can apply as a personal or family history applicants for your own records or those of your ancestors. You can apply for any records relating to you held by the department, or those relating to a specific purpose such as evidence of genealogy, dates and place of birth or a specific ancestor.

151 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004

PO Box 3153, East Perth WA 6892

Free call: 1300 651 077

Fax: 08 6551 8088

Email: ahru@daa.wa.gov.au

Web: www.daa.wa.gov.au/community-development/ahru

Missions and reserves by state and territory

The state-by-state listings below give the names of many (but not all) of the church and government missions and reserves around Australia.

To find records by yourself, you will need to know the name of the mission or reserve, and then find out the name of the government or church body that managed it.

New South Wales – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of mission	Church	Period
Bomaderry	UAM	1908–88
Bowraville	RC	1923–?
Goulburn Inland Mission Station	MTH	1916–?
La Perouse	unknown	1895–?
Lake Macquarie (Ebenezer)	LMS	1824–41
Maloga Mission School	unknown	1874–94
Parramatta	CE	1820–28
Sydney Aboriginal Mission	unknown	unknown
Warangesda	CE / ABM	1879–1920
Wellington Valley	CMS	1832–42
Yelta	unknown	unknown

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- State Records NSW holds various records relating to reserves. See [State archives relating to Aboriginal people](#).
- Also see [Living on Aboriginal reserves and stations](#), a NSW Government Environment & Heritage website.

Victoria – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of mission	Church	Period
Buntingdale	WMS / MTH	1839–48
Coranderrk	GOVT	1863–1924
Framlingham	CE	1865–67
Framlingham	GOVT	1869–70
Goulburn Station	GOVT	1841–54
Lake Boga	MOR	1851–56
Lake Condah	CE	1867–1913
Lake Condah	GOVT	1913–18
Lake Hindmarsh (Ebenezer)	MOR / PRES	1858–1903
Lake Tyers	CE	1861–1908
Lake Tyers	GOVT	1908–70
Lake Wellington (Ramahyuck)	MOR / PRES	1862–1908
Merri Creek School	BAP	1845–51
Mount Franklyn Station	GOVT	1839–64
Mount Rouse Station	GOVT	1841–51
Narre Narre Warren Station	GOVT	1841–43
Yarra Mission	CMS	1837–39
Yelta	CE	1855–68

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- The [Mission voices](#) web site contains background information, stories, timelines and maps on Victorian missions and reserves.

Queensland – selected missions and reserves

Here we have listed missions visited by anthropologist Norman Tindale in the 1930s – see Tindale genealogies for more information.

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Aurukun	MOR / PRES	1904–78
Bamaga	CE	1947–86
Bethesda	L	1866–89
Bloomfield River (Wujal Wujal)	L	1886–1902, 1957–87
Bowen	CMS	1878–1901
Cherbourg (Barambah)	CE	1904–86
Cowal Creek	CE	1915–87
Daintree River	AOG	1939–?
Doomadgee	BR	1932–83
Edward River	ABM	1935–67
Elim (<i>see Hopevale</i>)		
Fantome Island (Leper Station)	RC?	unknown
Fraser Island	ABM	1897–1904
Gorge Mission	AOG	unknown
Hopevale (Cape Bedford)	L	1886–1986
Kowanyama (Mitchell River)	ABM	1904–78
Lockhart River	ABM	1924–67
Mackay	MTH	1871–1901
Mapoon	MOR / PRES	1891–1987
Marie Yamba	L	1888–1902
Maryborough	CMS	unknown
Mona Mona	ADV	1913–?
Moreton Bay	L / PRES	1837–45
Moreton Bay	CMS	1837–46
Mornington Island	PRES	1914–78
Noangir (<i>see Moreton Bay</i>)		
Palm Island (St Michael's School)	RC	1931–86

Purga	SAL	1915–48
Somerset	SPG (CE)	1867–68
Stewards Creek	MTH	1885?–1901?
Stradbroke Island (Myora Mission)	RC	1843–47
Thursday Island	ABM	unknown
Thursday Island	LMS	1871–1915
Trubanaman (see <i>Kowanyama</i>)		
Weipa	MOR / PRES	1896–1966
Woorabinda	RC	1911–86
Yarrabah	ABM	1891–1960
Yungaburra	AOG	unknown
Zion Hill (see <i>Moreton Bay</i>)		

More information

The most thorough listing of Queensland missions is at the State Library of Queensland – see [Missions and reserves](#).

Western Australia – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Albany	RC	1845–48
Albany Boys Home	RC	unknown
Amy Bethel House	UAM	1956–75
Annesfield	unknown(Private)	1852–71?
Badjalang	UAM	1930–50?
Balgo Hills (Billiluna, Lake Gregory)	RC(P)	1931–80
Beagle Bay (West Kimberley)	RC(T/P)	1891–1976
Bennett House (previously East Perth Girl's Home)		
Boulder Working Youths Hostel	AAEMB	unknown
Broome Convent	RC	1908–?
Carrolup Native Settlement (Katanning)	GOVT	1915–22
Cundeelee	AAEMB	1950–?
Derby (Leper Station)	RC	1937–1987
Derby (Leper Station)	UAM	1930–75
Derby (Gibb River, Mowanjum, Pandanus)	RC	1940s–today
Disaster Bay	RC	1895?–1903
Drysdale River (see <i>Kalumburu</i>)		

Dulhi Gunyah Mission Home (Victoria Park)	UAM	1909–17
East Perth Girl's Home (later Bennett House)	GOVT	1931–?
Ellensbrook (Busselton)	GOVT	1899–1917
Esperance Mission Home	AAEMB	unknown
Fairhaven (Esperance)	CC	unknown
Fitzroy Crossing	UAM	1952–87
Forrest River (Kimberley)	CE / ABM	1913–71
Fremantle (<i>see Swan River</i>)		
Gascoyne	CE	1885–?
Gnowangerup	UAM	1926–73
Guildford	RC	1846–48
Halls Creek	UAM	1957–67
Halls Creek (Parochial Mission area)	RC	1961–today
Holy Child Orphanage (Broome –previously St John of God Home for Native Girls)	RC	1912–70
Jigalong (East Pilbara)	APC	1945–69
Kalgoorlie Girls Home	SAL	1909–30
Kalumburu (East Kimberley – previously Drysdale River)	RC(B)	1907–82
Karalundi	ADV	1954–?
Katanning	BAP	1952–?
Katukutu Home	BAP	unknown
Kellerberrin	BAP	1939–50?
Kunmunya (Kimberley – previously Port George IV)	PRES	1913–53
Kununurra	RC	1964–today
Kurrawang	BR	1952–?
Kyewong Home	BAP	unknown
La Grange (West Kimberley)	RC (PSM /P)	1924–85?
Lombadina (One Arm Point, Cygnet Point)	RC (PSM)	1911–85?
MacDonald House (Perth)	CE	unknown
Maria Goretti Home	RC	1960s
Marribank (<i>see Katanning</i>)		
Methodist Children's Home	MTH	unknown
Mogumber	MTH	1951–?
Moola Bulla (East Kimberley)	GOVT	1911–54
Moore River Native Settlement (Mogumber)	GOVT	1918–51
Mount Magnet	UAM	unknown

Mount Margaret (Goldfields)	UAM	1921–75
Mowanjum	PRES	1956–81
New Norcia (Victoria Plains)	RC (B)	1846–70
Norseman	CC	1942–?
Ocean View Home	RC	unknown
Pallotine Boys Hostel (Albany)	RC (P)	1968–78
Perth Native Institution	MTH	1840s
Port George IV (later called Kunmunyah)	PRES	1910–16
Range View Students Home	PRES	unknown
Rockhole (Balgo)	RC	1934–?
Roelands Native Mission Farm	INTER / CC	1938–today
Rossmoyne Training Centre	RC	1955–today
St John of God Home for Native Girls (Broome – later called Holy Child Orphanage)		
St Joseph's Home (near Derby)	RC	1961–today
Sister Kate's Home (Queens Park, Perth)	ANG	1933–50?
Smithies Mission (Perth)	WMS	1842–55
Sunday Island (Kimberley)	UAM / ABM	1898–1964
Swan Native and Half–Caste Home/Mission	ANG	1870–1921
Swan River	CE	1852–?
Tardun (Pallotine Mission School)	RC (P)	1948–today
Vasse Mission School	CE	unknown
Wandering (St Xavier Native Mission)	RC	1944–76
Waneroo (Perth)	MTH	1831–54
Warburton Ranges	UAM	1933–77
Warminda Girls Home	MTH	unknown
Wiluna	ADV	unknown
Wonguntha Mission Training Farm (Esperance)	INTER	1954–?
Wotjalum	PRES	1953–56
Wyndham	unknown	1959–today

More information

- The State Records Office of WA holds extensive records relating to missions which are listed in [Looking West: A Guide to Aboriginal Records in Western Australia \(pdf, 385kb\)](#). Also see their webpage about [Aboriginal records](#).
- Information on missions in Western Australia can also be found at [Signposts: A Guide for Children and Young People in Care in WA from 1920](#).

South Australia – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution	Church	Period
Adelaide Children's Home	ABM	unknown
Adelaide School	L	1839–48
Colebrook Home	UAM	1927–78
Davenport	BR	1937–65
Encounter Bay	L	1840–48
Ernabella	PRES / UC	1937–today
Finniss Springs	UAM	1939–65
Gerard	UAM	1925–61
Kadina	MOR	1865–?
Killalpaninna (<i>see Kopperamanna</i>)		
Koonibba	L	1901–63
Kopperamanna	L	1866–1917
Limbuana (<i>see Encounter Bay</i>)		
Manunka Aborigines Mission Home	unknown	1902?–06?
Mount Gambier	AFA	unknown
Nepabunna	UAM	1930–today
Oodnadatta	UAM	1924–?
Ooldea	UAM	1933–54
Point McLeay	AFA	1858–1916
Point Pearce	unknown	1868–1915
Poonindie	ABM	1850–75
PortLincoln	L	1840–45
St Francis House (Adelaide)	ABM	1949–57
Swan Reach (<i>see Gerard</i>)		
Umeewarra	BR	1937–65
Yalata	L	1954–75

More information

- The State Library of South Australia has prepared a research guide on [Aboriginal missions in South Australia](#).

Tasmania

- There were no church–run Aboriginal missions in Tasmania – see [Aboriginal missions](#) in the *Companion to Tasmanian History* for more information.

- Anthropologist Norman Tindale visited the Aboriginal communities on the reserve on Cape Barren Island in the 1930s – see Tindale genealogies.

Northern Territory – selected missions and reserves

(The abbreviations are explained in the section ‘Church names, missions and abbreviations’.)

Name of institution / mission	Church	Period
Alice Springs (Children's Home)	ABM	unknown
Alice Springs/Arltunga	RC	1937–42, 1942–54
Angurugu (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1921–78
Areyonga	L	1942–55
Bagot Compound	AIM	unknown
Bamyill (Katherine)	AIM	1969–?
Baptist Home (Darwin)	BAP	1969–76?
Bathurst Island	RC(MSC)	1911–today
Belyuen (see Delissaville)		
Berrimah Leper Station (<i>see Channel Island</i>)		
Borroloola	AIM	1951–today
Buckingham Bay (<i>see Elcho Island</i>)		
Channel Island (Leper Station)	RC	1930–43, 1955–82
Croker Island	MTH	1940–today
Daly River	RC(J/MSC)	1886–99, 1956–today
Dellssaville(Belyuen)	AIM	1946?–?
East Arm Settlement (Leper Station)	RC	1923–24
Elcho Island	MTH	1922–23, 1942–today
Elliot	UAM	unknown
Emerald River (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1921–42
Finke River Mission House (Alice Springs)	L	?–today
Galiwinku (<i>see Elcho Island</i>)		
Garden Point	RC	1940–?
Goulburn Island	MTH	1915–today
Haast Bluff	L	1940–54
Hermannsburg	L	1877–1982
Kahlin Compound	AIM	1940–?
Kalkaringi	B???	1971–today
Katherine (Donkey Camp)	AIM	1941–today
Lajamanu (Hooker Creek)	B???	1962–today
Melville Island	RC(MSC)	1940–68

Milingimbi	MTH	1925–today
Newcastle Waters	AIM	1940s–72?
Numbulwar	CMS	1952–78
Oenpelli	CMS	1924–74
Palmerston	CMS	unknown
Papunya	L	1946–54
Phillip Creek	AIM	1936–51
Port Essington	RC	1846–49
Port Keats	RC	1935–today
Rapid Creek	RC(J)	1882–91
Retta Dixon Home (Darwin)	AIM	1946–80
Roper River	CMS	1908–68
Rose River (<i>see Numbulwar</i>)		
St Mary's Hostel (Alice Springs)	CE / AIM	1946–today
St Teresa	RC(MSC)	1954–today
Serpentine Lagoon	RC(J)	1889–91
Tennant Creek	RC	1936–today
Umbakumba (Groote Eylandt)	CMS	1958–66
Uniya	RC(J)	1886–99
Warrabri (Ali Curung)	BAP	1957–today
Yirrkala	MTH	1935–today
Yuendumu	BAP	1947–today

Source: *Lookin for Your Mob: A Guide to Tracing Aboriginal Family Trees*, by Diane Smith and Boronia Halstead, Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990. Although this list is not complete, it includes the most relevant reserves and missions for family history research.

More information

- Records of some churches with missions in the Northern Territory are held in the NT Archives Service and are listed in [Guide to archives relating to Aboriginal people](#) (pdf, 85kb). These include the personal records of missionaries and government workers.
- The National Archives of Australia also holds records relating to Aboriginal missions and reserves in the Northern Territory. See the chapter on [Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory](#) in their guide, *Commonwealth government records about the Northern Territory*.

Australian Capital Territory

There were no missions or reserves in the ACT.



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Church names, missions and abbreviations

AAEMB – Australian Aborigines Evangelical Mission Board

ABM – Australian Board of Mission

ADV – Seventh Day Adventists

AFA – Aborigines' Friends' Association

AIM – Aborigines Inland Mission

ANG – Anglican

AOG – Assembly of God

APC – Apostolic Church

BAP – Australian Baptist Missionary Society

BR – Brethren

CMS – Church Missionary Society

CC – Church of Christ

CE – Church of England

GOVT – Government-run

INTER – Interdenominational

L – Lutheran Church of Australia

LMS – London Missionary Society

MTH – Methodist Overseas Mission

MOR – Moravians

PRES – Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions

RC – Roman Catholic

RC(B) – Benedictine

RC(J) – Jesuit

RC(MSC) – Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

RC(P) – Pallotine

RC(PSM) – Pious Society of Missions

RC(T) – Trappists

SAL – Salvation Army

SPG – Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

UAM – United Aborigines Mission

UC – Uniting Church

WMS – Wesleyan Missionary Society





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Sources – electoral rolls and voter records

It's a common belief that the 1967 Referendum gave Indigenous people the right to vote. This isn't true. Aboriginal people could vote before 1967, but many didn't know their rights or were discouraged from voting.

Laws about who could and could not vote changed over time and differed between the states. For example, Point McLeay mission in South Australia got a polling station in the 1890s. Aboriginal men and women voted at Point McLeay in South Australian elections and voted for the first Commonwealth Parliament in 1901.

Also, many Aboriginal people were granted exemption from the protection and welfare laws and exercised their right to vote. Others were never caught by the protection and welfare system or 'passed' as other kinds of 'coloured' people and had the same rights as any other citizens.

So, it's worth checking if your ancestors ever enrolled to vote. You might find out the family's residential address or track changes of address over time. Electoral rolls can also help identify other adult family members living at the same address.

What are electoral rolls?

Electoral rolls are lists of people who registered to vote in state, territory or federal elections. They are updated before every election and may provide information such as:

- address
- occupation
- age
- other people registered at the same address
- other people who were neighbours.

What information do you need to search for electoral rolls?

To start researching you need to know:

- the name of the person you are researching
- the electorate, town or general area where they lived.



Where do you find electoral rolls?

Historical electoral rolls

- Electoral rolls can often be searched at your local library, state library or family history society.
- The [National Library in Canberra](#) keeps microfiche of the Commonwealth electoral rolls from 1901 to present. Some of these may be slightly imperfect. The library also holds a limited number of state electoral rolls on microfiche for the time prior to Federation in 1901. They provide a limited look-up service if you can't visit the library.
- [Ancestry.com.au](#) provides access to scanned and searchable electoral rolls from 1903 to 1980 for every state and territory, except South Australia, and earlier for New South Wales.

Current electoral roll

You can view an electronic copy of the current electoral roll (e-roll) at any office of the Australian Electoral Commission. See the [AEC website](#) for more information.

Other resources

- [Indigenous people and the vote](#) (Australian Electoral Commission)
- [Indigenous Australians – electoral timeline](#) (Australian Electoral Commission)



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Sources – police gazettes, court and gaol records

Legal records, including records created by the police, the courts and the gaols, can be useful for locating information about your ancestors. In fact, these records might be the only official mention of particular Aboriginal people.

During the early periods of white settlement, police officers in isolated regions often took on the role of local magistrate and sometimes became 'Protectors' of Aborigines, distributing rations and carrying out government policies.

Aboriginal people also worked with the police as trackers, sometimes in special native police units.

What are police, court and gaol records?

Police, court and gaol records are a diverse range of records that date from the early decades of white settlement. They include records like:

- police station occurrence books and charge books
- records about members of the police force
- judges' bench books and court case files
- photographs of prisoners and registers of inmates.

These records can provide many details about people's lives.

Police gazettes are a good example of this. They were circulated to police stations and contained lists of crimes committed, escaped prisoners, warrants issued and court reports. Not all the people mentioned were on the wrong side of the law – information was published about the victims of crimes, too, and about missing persons.

What information do you need to look for these records?

You'll need to search using a combination of these three things:

- the name of the person you are researching
- the place they lived
- the dates they lived there.



You can find useful information about police and court matters – such as newsworthy incidents, police arrests, court hearings and legal trials – in historical newspapers. It is worthwhile checking [Trove Digitised Newspapers](#) first to see what you can find.

Sometimes newspaper accounts are the only remaining record of events, since not all police, court and gaol records have been kept until today.

Where do you find police, court and gaol records?

The police, courts and gaols were run by colonial governments, then state and territory governments after 1901. This means that you will find the records in the state or territory archive for where your ancestor lived.

Family history websites like [Ancestry](#) and [Find My Past](#) provide access to some police, court and gaol records, but nothing that you can't also access through government archives. The [Centre for Indigenous Family History](#) has indexes to some police records.

These websites are useful for doing a quick check – but because they generally only have the 'most popular' records, for more in-depth research you'll need to look at the archives too.

New South Wales

See these resources from State Records NSW:

- [A guide to New South Wales State archives relating to Aboriginal people](#) – has chapters listing records relating to the police, courts of petty sessions and Supreme Court
- [Index to Aboriginal colonial court cases, 1788–1838](#)
- [Police service records](#) – has information on records about Aboriginal trackers who worked with the police

Northern Territory

From 1863 to 1910 the Northern Territory was part of South Australia. From 1911 it came under the control of the Commonwealth government until the Territory won self-government in 1978.

See these resources:

- [Guide to archives relating to Aboriginal people](#) (PDF 85 KB) from Northern Territory Archives Service
- Northern Territory Archives Services in the *Tracking Family* guide

Queensland

See these resources from Queensland State Archives:

- [Records relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#) (PDF 51 KB)
- [Police gazettes](#) (PDF 44 KB)
- [Court records](#) (PDF 329 KB)
- [Murder files](#) (PDF 73 KB)
- Complete list of [Brief guides](#) from Queensland State Archives

You might also find information at the [Queensland Police Museum](#), which has material about the native mounted police and Aboriginal trackers.

South Australia

See these resources from State Records of South Australia:

- [Finding your Aboriginal history](#)
- [Courts](#)
- [Gaols](#)

You may also find information at the [South Australia Police Historical Society](#).

Tasmania

See these resources from LINC Tasmania:

- [Tasmanian court records](#)
- [Tasmanian prison records](#)

Victoria

See these resources from the Public Record Office of Victoria:

- [Koorie heritage: Aboriginal records at PROV](#) – includes links to an exhibition about the native police and to other articles of interest
- [walata tyamateetj: A guide to government records about Aboriginal people in Victoria](#) – includes a section on legal, police and prison records
- [Court records](#)
- [Prison records](#)

- [Police records](#)

You might also find information at the [Victoria Police Museum and Historical Services Unit](#).

Western Australia

See these resources from the State Records Office of WA:

- [Aboriginal records](#) – lists police, court and prison records relating to Aboriginal people
- [Court records](#)
- [Police records](#)
- [Prison and gaol records](#)



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Sources – maps

Place is central to your research into your Aboriginal family's history. Knowing where your ancestors lived helps you to locate records about them, but it also helps you understand what their lives were like. For example, you can track how they moved throughout their life – whether they stayed close to where they were born, or whether they moved long distances.

Contemporary maps, like a printed road map or Google Maps online, show things how they are today. They're a good place to start to work out where exactly it was that your ancestors lived.

Historical maps show places as they were at some time in the past. If possible you should try to find one from the period you are researching.

Historical maps are particularly helpful if your ancestors lived on a rural property or a small or remote place that may not exist today. It can be hard to locate such places on contemporary maps, but if you know the general area you might be able to find them on a historical map. Historical maps can also help when the spelling of a place name has changed.

The one [Geoscience Australia Place Names Search](#) is a useful tool in locating places around Australia.

Historical maps are held in many library collections around Australia. A growing number are digitised and available to view online, while others you will need to view in the library itself.

Maps of Aboriginal Australia

Maps that illustrate Indigenous language groups and tribal boundaries might also be helpful in your research. Some of these maps show Indigenous group boundaries as they existed when Europeans first colonised Australia. Other maps represent current distributions of language use.

- [AIATSIS Aboriginal Australia map](#)
- State Library of South Australia: [Maps of Aboriginal Australia](#)
- Western Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs: [Maps](#)

Online guides to maps

National

- National Library of Australia: [Australian maps for family historians](#)
- Trove: [Maps](#)



- Noel Butlin Archives Centre: [Maps](#)

New South Wales

- State Library of NSW: [Map collection](#)
- NSW Land and Property Information: [Parish and historical maps](#)

Queensland

- State Library of Queensland: [Maps](#)

South Australia

- State Library of South Australia: [Maps and geodata](#)

Tasmania

- Tasmania: [Town and property maps, plans and names](#) in *Guide to resources for Tasmanian genealogy* by Malcolm Ward

Victoria

- State Library of Victoria: [Maps for family history](#)
- University of Melbourne: [Map collections](#)

Western Australia

- State Records Office of Western Australia: [Maps online](#)



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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 helps you understand what their life was like.

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](#). State and local libraries also hold 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 have pastoral maps, records of land surveys and detailed records of who has bought and sold properties over time.

- Australian Capital Territory – [Access Canberra: Land titles](#)
- New South Wales
 - Land and Property Information: [Historical research](#)
 - Land and Property Information: [Parish and historical maps](#)
- Northern Territory
 - [Northern Territory Land and Planning Services](#)
 - Northern Territory Archives Service: [Guide to archives relating to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory](#)
 - National Archives of Australia: [Records about the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory](#)
- Queensland
 - Department of Natural Resources and Mines – [Land and property](#)
 - Queensland State Archives Brief Guide 5 – [Land tenure records](#) (PDF, 170kb)
- South Australia – [Housing, property and land: About historical searching](#)
- Tasmania – [Land Tasmania](#)
- Victoria – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning: [Land titles](#)
- Western Australia – Landgate: [Historical records](#)

Pastoral station records

There is a range of other records that provide historical information about pastoral properties. These 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](#) 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](#) 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](#)
 - Queensland: [Land records from the State Library of Queensland](#)
 - Queensland: [Museum of Lands, Mapping and Surveying](#)
 - Queensland: Queensland State Archives – [Lands](#)
 - South Australia: Family History SA – [Land, maps, place names](#)
 - Victoria: [Land records at the Public Record Office of Victoria](#)
 - Tasmania: [LINC Tasmania research guides](#), including land titles, place names, building histories
 - Victoria: Researching your Victorian ancestors – [Land records and rates books](#)
 - Western Australia: [Guide to WA history – Land from the State Library of WA](#)
- 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 has lots of pastoral station records) for help tracking ownership.
- [Ancestry](#) and [Find My Past](#) provide access to certain land and property records.
- CoraWeb has a section on [maps, place names and land records](#).





AIATSIS

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL
AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES

Family History Unit

Freecall: 1800 352 553

Fax: 02 6261 4287

Email: familyhistory@aiatsis.gov.au

Sources – Dawn and New Dawn Magazines

The *Dawn* and *New Dawn* were magazines published between 1952 and 1975 by the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board, with the aim of providing interesting information and an exchange of news and views. The *Dawn* and *New Dawn* were also a way for Aboriginal people to keep in contact.

The magazines are a valuable source of family history information as they include details of births, deaths, marriages and baptisms, as well as hundreds of photographs.

The *Dawn* and *New Dawn* contain articles about the conditions and activities on reserves, stations, homes and schools throughout New South Wales. During their time of publication the magazines were also used to report the work of the Aboriginal Welfare Board.

What information do you need to research these magazines?

The *Dawn* and *New Dawn* have been fully indexed in the AIATSIS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index (ABI) and the State Library of New South Wales INFORKOORI index.

This means that you can search for articles in the magazines using keywords such as:

- your ancestor's name
- the name of the place they lived, worked or studied.

Where do you find the *Dawn* and *New Dawn*?

AIATSIS has made digital copies of the entire collection of the magazines and published them on our website. It also has hardcopies of the magazines. To search and view the *Dawn* and *New Dawn* you can:

- search the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Biographical Index (ABI)
- search INFOKOORI
- browse the digital copies of the Dawn and New Dawn
- find hard copies held by Australian libraries using Trove (National Library of Australia):
 - [Dawn: A magazine for the Aboriginal people of NSW](#)
 - [New Dawn: A magazine for the Aboriginal people of New South Wales](#)





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Sources – other records and collections

Biographical indexes and dictionaries

An index is a detailed alphabetical guide to names, places or topics, with a reference to where the information can be found. Indexes don't contain actual information, though they might include a summary.

A **biographical index** is a list of people's names and the location (e.g. page numbers and library catalogue numbers) of the information about them.

There are a number of useful biographical indexes of Aboriginal people:

- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index](#) – AIATSIS
- [INFOKOORI Australian Indigenous Index](#) – State Library of New South Wales
- [Bringing Them Home Index](#) – National Archives of Australia
- [Indigenous indexes](#) – Queensland State Archives
- [Index to the Chief Protector of Aborigines files 1898–1908](#) – State Records Office of WA

Biographical dictionaries are alphabetically indexed lists of people containing information about their lives.

For example, the *Dictionaries of Western Australians* was a major project that includes four volumes about Aboriginal people. Names were taken from the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, private journals, newspapers and published journals. For example, the names and details of Aboriginal people imprisoned on Rottnest Island are listed.

You can find other biographical dictionaries through a search in [Trove](#).

Census records

Aboriginal Australians have been counted in some censuses of the Australian population, but have been deliberately excluded from others. Section 127 of the *Constitution Act 1900* stated that 'Aboriginal natives shall not be counted', but exclusion also occurred in earlier censuses.

Government definitions of Aboriginality have also varied over time, meaning an Aboriginal person of mixed ancestry might have been counted in one census and excluded from another census.



Some census records therefore include information about Aboriginal people. In New South Wales, for example, the 1891 and 1901 Census collectors books list the names of householders and the number of Aboriginal people living in each household.

The State Library of Victoria has a guide on [early Australian census records](#), including a section on [censuses of Aboriginal Australians](#).

Local history collections in public libraries and local museums

Many local public libraries in suburbs and towns collect books, photographs, maps, letters and newspapers about their local area – a local history collection. Many towns also have small local museums. These collections can be useful to Aboriginal researchers because they might have records of local properties listing Aboriginal stock workers, local newspapers, family diaries and photographs.

Two websites that maintain lists of family history and historical societies are:

- CoraWeb – Genealogy, Family History and Historical Societies:
www.coraweb.com.au/categories/family-history-and-historical-societies
- Cape Banks Family History Society – Australian Family History & Historical Societies:
www.capebanks.org.au/australian-family-history-societies/

You can use **Australian Libraries Gateway – Find a Library** (www.nla.gov.au/apps/libraries) to locate libraries with family history and local history collections. Under location select your state and under library type select 'Local/Family history'. You can also browse using the map.

Land council records

Your local land council or other Aboriginal organisation (such as cultural and arts groups, training institutes, medical and legal services) might have their own resource collections. They might hold books, pamphlets and newsletters about local events and people, as well as tribal and contact history. Some Aboriginal communities have organised their own family history groups and work together recording oral histories and writing community histories.

Union, company and employment records

The Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the Australian National University collects business and labour records from Australian companies, trade unions, industry bodies and professional organisations. Its collection includes records of trade unions and pastoral properties. See [Records about Aboriginal people](#) (PDF 119 KB) for more information.

