

When conducting historical research on property, a key question is whether you already know the address of the property or whether you are starting with a name and don't have the address. This information sheet provides suggestions on how to carry out your research in either case.

Search results for History of Title Transactions, available through LPI's [approved information brokers](#), will not show the names of previous owners or the sale prices associated with transactions.

Searches where the address is known

If you know the address of the property that you are researching, you can work backwards from its current title to find previous records. Commonly, this would be done following this sequence:

Current Computer Folio(s) Street Address Inquiry

To look for the title reference for the property if you don't have it already. Use the free Prior title search in the [LPI Online portal](#) to work backwards to earlier computerised folios until you reach a previous title reference formatted with a '--', e.g. Vol 4344 Fol42. This refers to a manual Torrens Title folio, which preceded computerisation.

Manual Torrens Title folios

Before computerisation in 1983, Torrens Title records were kept in paper form as numbered folios in bound volumes, going back to 1863. There is normally at least one and possibly many paper folios for a property prior to computerisation. All manual Torrens Title folios in Volumes 1 to 8497 have been imaged. The imaged titles Torrens Title Image (Vol 1-15048) are available LPI's [approved information brokers](#). The image may show multiple transfers of ownership, mortgages, and other transactions.

Those titles in Volumes 8498 to 15048 that are not available online can be purchased over the counter at LPI's office 1 Prince Albert Road, Sydney.

At the top of the manual title, the previous title reference is shown, so you can continue working backwards to previous manual Torrens Title folios.

Primary Applications

Some properties began life as a Torrens Title property, but many Torrens Title properties were originally Old System titles. If so, at some point, they were converted from Old System to Torrens Title. Many conversions occurred in response to Primary Applications (PA) submitted by owners, while some conversions resulted from Conversion Actions carried out by the state.

The Primary Application number for the property would normally appear at the top of the earliest manual Torrens Title folio for a property (and sometimes on later folios). The PA number can also sometimes be found on the deposited plan for the property or on a Charting Map for the locality. (Charting Maps can be found in the [Historical Land Records Viewer](#)). The PA number may also appear on the final deed in the Old System.

The PA contains a summary of the documents going back in time which establish the title at the time of conversion. The PA file or 'packet' contains the original PA and may include Old System Deeds, wills, statutory declarations, and other documents which supported the chain of title claimed in the PA.

Staff at the ground floor counter can assist you to determine whether the PA packet has been transferred to [State Records](#) or is still in the custody of LPI. In either case, you can arrange to examine it.

Old System Deeds

Before conversion, records of the property are in the Old System. The Old System documents prior to 1992 have not been imaged and must be examined in books held in the B1 Basement at LPI's offices at 1 Prince Albert Road, Sydney. As indicated, copies of some of them may be in the PA Packet as well.

Crown Grants

Prior to belonging to an individual, land in NSW was held by the Crown. It was granted to individuals using Crown Grants.

Exceptions

There are many exceptions to this sequence. For instance, a property may have been converted to the Torrens Title system since computerisation in 1983, with the result that there are no previous manual Torrens Title folios. Or it may have gone straight from a Crown Grant to a manual Torrens Title folio, without ever being recorded in the Old System. However, the suggested sequence above indicates a frequent path that a search would take.

Searches where the address isn't known

If you don't know the address of a property, it is unlikely that you will be able to start with searches in the [LPI Online portal](#) or through LPI's [approved information brokers](#). Your first task is to search in indexes or registers for the name of the person you are tracing, which will likely lead you to an address or title reference.

For instance, you may wish to search the indexes to Torrens Title and to Old System land that are held in the B1 level of LPI's office at 1 Prince Albert Road, Sydney. The indexes are divided into periods so a search of every year is not required.

If you find a name and property reference in the Torrens Title Purchaser's Index, which began in 1863, you can look at an image of the manual title folio on a terminal at LPI. You can order a copy of the folio over the counter or through LPI's [approved information brokers](#).

If you find a reference to a name and property in the Old System's Vendor's Index (1825 to date) or the Old System Purchaser's Index (1896 to date), you will need to physically examine the identified Old System book and page in the B1 level basement, as there are currently no digitised images of Deeds registered before 1992. You can also order a copy over the counter.

You can also search for addresses outside of LPI. For instance, you can use electoral rolls, valuation rolls, Council records, and other lists and records held elsewhere to locate names and addresses. State Records offers advice on using these rolls to locate persons.

Facilities at LPI's office

There are two counters to visit at 1 Prince Albert Road, Sydney to view and obtain copies of records. The ground floor counter principally offers access to material in the Torrens Title system, including records which may not yet be available in computerised form.

The basement 1, West Wing, (B1) room contains physical records pertaining both to Torrens Title and Old System title. After you have examined a document on B1, you may purchase a copy over the counter in B1.

There are also computer terminals on the ground floor and in the B1 document room, offering the free searches available online through the [LPI Online portal](#) or through LPI's [approved information brokers](#).

Paid searches for plan and dealing images, title searches and title images are available through LPI's [approved information brokers](#).

