

Service Information – PROV's Reading Room and Reference Services

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) was established in 1973 as Victoria's archival authority. It is responsible for the preservation of public records that are considered worthy of permanent retention as evidence of government policy and activity. Public records are created by government departments and authorities, the State's courts, municipalities, schools, public hospitals and other public offices. They have value for historical, genealogical or other research, and document the status, rights and entitlements of the people of Victoria.

See also [PROVguide 22 PROV Records Access Service Charter](#).

Records

Only a fraction of the records created have been transferred to Public Record Office Victoria. The records date from the earliest days of the public administration of the Port Phillip District in the mid 1830s.

PROV's Online Catalogue

PROV's online catalogue is available through the [Access the Collection](#) pages of the PROV website, available at www.access.prov.vic.gov.au. You can use these pages to:

- Register a user account
- Search for details about records in the collection
- Order records for viewing in PROV's Reading Rooms
- Place an alert on records that are not available for ordering
- View electronic and digitised records
- View records you have accessed previously
- Explore *PROVguides*, Research Pathways and online Help for assistance with your research
- Print copies of your search results for future reference
- Print copies of your order for future reference

PROV's Reference Helpdesk

PROV does not provide a research service

Please note that PROV staff are unable to undertake research on your behalf. We can however, refer you to professional search agents who charge a fee for their services. See [PROVguide 15 Search Agents](#).

For assistance with using PROV's online catalogue you can contact our helpdesk:

- By phone: **1800 657 452** tollfree throughout Australia
- By email: ask.prov@prov.vic.gov.au. Email and letter enquiries will be responded to within 15 working days
- By Post: Reference Services, PO Box 2100, North Melbourne, VIC 3051

Reading Rooms

Reference Service

A reference service is provided to the public through Reading Rooms at the Ballarat Archives Centre (BAC) and the Victorian Archives Centre (VAC). Reading Room staff can assist with the identification

and retrieval of records. Individuals wishing to undertake research with original records are advised to visit the Reading Rooms as research cannot be provided in response to telephone calls, emails or letters.

Copy Service

A photocopy service is provided in PROV Reading Rooms for a fee. Requests must be made in person, and finalised and paid for by 4.15pm. Alternative copy methods are available for large format and fragile material that can not be photocopied. Print copies from microfilm and microfiche can be made by members of the public. See [PROVguide 2 Copying Services](#) and [PROVguide 3 Copying Services - Government Access](#) for further information.

Digital Cameras

Researchers can make photographic copies of records they have ordered using their own digital camera provided that certain conditions of use are observed. These conditions include restrictions on photographing records that are not under crown copyright. See [PROVguide 24 Use of Digital Cameras in PROV Reading Rooms](#) for details.

Ballarat Archives Centre

Opening Hours

9.30am to 4.30pm **Monday and Tuesday (except for public holidays).**

Location

Level One, State Public Offices
Cnr Doveton and Mair Streets
Ballarat 3350

Phone (03) 5333 6611

Access to Records

Original records of the Central Highlands and parts of the Grampians and Wimmera regions of Victoria, together with microform copies of frequently used genealogical records can be consulted in the Ballarat Reading Room. See [PROVguide 9 Ballarat Archives Centre](#) for more information.

Victorian Archives Centre

Opening Hours

9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday (except for public holidays) and two Saturdays per month (see www.prov.vic.gov.au/contact.asp for details).

Location

99 Shiel Street
North Melbourne 3051

Phone (03) 9348 5600

Tollfree 1800 657 452 (throughout Australia) for reference inquiries.

The Victorian Archives Centre is a joint research facility operated by Public Record Office Victoria and National Archives of Australia. At the Centre you can conduct your research using records held by both Public Record Office Victoria and National Archives of Australia.

Public Record Office Victoria and the National Archives share the Reading Room but remain separate entities, governed by their own legislation and regulations, with differences in certain procedures and fees.

Refreshments

Cafe 99 is onsite and is open from Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. There are shops in nearby Melrose Street.

Access to Records

Records are stored onsite at the Victorian Archives Centre (VAC). The Reading Room holds a reference collection of microform copies of records frequently used by family historians.

You can order up to 20 items or units at any one time. Ordering of physical records is carried out online, and can be done in one of PROV's Reading Rooms or wherever you use the internet.

Records are delivered to the VAC Reading Room on weekdays and on [Saturday openings](#) (two per month) at the following times: 9.30am, 11.00am, 2.00pm and 3.30pm.

To receive records at these collection times, records must be ordered before:

- 9.30am to make the 11.00am collection time
- 11.30am to make the 2.00pm collection time
- 2.00pm to make the 3.30pm collection time
- 4.00pm to make the 9.30 collection time the next working day.

Please note: Records in cold storage require an additional 24 hours to be delivered.

There are up to four items per delivery for each researcher. Records are held in the Reading Room for 10 working days before being returned to the repository.

If you have special needs that you would like to discuss before you visit, or if you have suggestions about our services, please contact us on (03) 9348 5600 or tollfree on 1800 657 452. For enquiries about using [PROV's online catalogue](#) you can contact our Helpdesk tollfree on 1800 657 452.

Ordering Records

Ordering of physical records is carried out online, and can be done in one of PROV's Reading Rooms or wherever you use the internet. For information about registering a user account, searching online and ordering records online please refer to these PROV *guides*:

[PROV guide 19 Registering and Maintaining a Public User Account](#)

[PROV guide 12 Registering and Maintaining a Government User Account](#)

[PROV guide 20 Searching for Records Online](#)

[PROV guide 21 Ordering Records](#)

To order records you need a:

- User ID
- Password

And for each record item you want:

- Series ID and consignment (eg. VPRS 24/P0, VPRS 7591/P2 etc)
- Unit ID (usually a box or volume number)
- Item (file) reference (Please note; not all records can be ordered at Item level. In such cases, PROV will issue records at Unit (box) level)

If you do not have internet access or if you have a disability that prevents you from using the internet you can fax or mail your order:

Fax: (03) 9348 5656
Mail: PROV Helpdesk
Public Record Office Victoria
PO Box 2100
North Melbourne VIC 3051

Please include the words RECORD ORDER prominently in your fax or letter and allow three to five days for PROV to receive, process and retrieve your order.

Please note: Records in cold storage require an additional 24 hours to be delivered.