

Land, Places and Local History - Public Works Department - Building Services Agency Plans

The Public Works Department ([VA 669](#)) was responsible for the design, construction and maintenance of Victorian Government buildings such as schools, mental hospitals, government offices and other public buildings. PROV holds the plans created by the Public Works Department and its successor agency, the Building Services Agency (BSA). The drawings date from 1853 to 1998 and are a valuable resource for researching a range of properties in Victoria.

Information on Drawings

Drawing categories include Architectural, Civil and Hydraulic Services, Electrical Services, Landscape, Mechanical Services, Structural, Standard drawings and Survey. Details show site plans, elevations, sections, floor plans, fitments, structural works, roof plans and site survey plans. Service drawings include water supply, sewerage, stormwater, drainage, gas supply, civil works, electrical services including power and lighting, fire services, and mechanical services including equipment, boilers, fuel tanks, heating, air conditioning and ventilation.

Accessing the Records

Plans are available on microfilm cards, also known as aperture cards, at the Victorian Archives Centre (VAC) Reading Room. They can only be ordered manually, using the steps below. You can contact PROV's Helpdesk on 1800 657 452 (tollfree in Australia) for advice on searching and placing an order.

Please note: Authorisation to view or copy plans for Prisons, Youth Training Centres, Police Stations, Courts and Parliament must be obtained from the government department responsible for those buildings (Corrections Victoria, Department of Human Services, Victoria Police, individual Courts, and Parliament, respectively). See the Accessing Restricted Plans section in this *PROVguide* for details.

- Step 1 Set up a user account on PROV's online catalogue. See [PROVguide 19](#) for information on registering a Public User Account if you do not already have one.
- Step 2 Collect an application for Microfilm BSA drawings from the VAC copy desk or the Ballarat Archives Centre (BAC) enquiries desk. You can also [download an application form](#).
- Step 3 Search the Building Services Agency database index [online](#) or at the VAC or BAC Reading Room to identify relevant plans and obtain drawing registration numbers. Enter these numbers on the back of the application form (maximum 20 cards each delivery) and complete the form. If you require more than 20 cards urgently, please contact the PROV Helpdesk on 1800 657 452 (toll free in Australia) who can advise on a timeframe. **Please Note:** See steps below for accessing restricted plans.
- Step 4 Email or fax your order form to the PROV Helpdesk: ask.prov@dvc.vic.gov.au or 03 9348 5656, or give your order form to reference staff at the VAC Copy desk. At BAC staff can fax the order to VAC. Please leave two working days for faxed and email orders to be placed.

Ordering and Collection times at VAC:

- Order before 9.30 am collection time 11.00 am
- Order before 11.30 am collection time 2.00 pm
- Order before 2.00 pm collection time 3.30 pm
- Order before 4.00 pm collection time 9.30 am next day

- Step 5 Collect your records order from the Collections desk at VAC.
- Step 6 At VAC view microfilm cards on the BSA reader printer in the microform area and print if required. Copies can be reproduced at A2, A3, A4 or ½ scale.
- Step 7 Prints cost \$0.95 each (includes GST) and are paid for at the copy desk.

Accessing Restricted Plans

- Step 1 Set up a user account on PROV's online catalogue. See [PROVguide 19](#) for information on registering a Public User Account if you do not already have one.
- Step 2 Obtain written authorisation to view plans relating to the building of interest on departmental letterhead from the government department responsible for the building you are researching. For courts, contact the court directly, or the Melbourne Magistrates Court for a magistrate's court. For all other buildings contact the branch in the department that manages properties.
- Step 3 Collect an Application for Microfilm BSA drawings from the VAC Copy desk or the BAC enquiries desk. You can also [download an application form](#).
- Step 4 Complete the Contact Details and Restricted Plans sections on the application form. Email or fax your order form, and a copy of the written authorisation to the PROV Helpdesk: ask.prov@dvc.vic.gov.au or 03 9348 5656, or give your order form to reference staff at the VAC copy desk. At BAC staff can fax the order to VAC.
- Step 5 A PROV Reference Officer will search the BSA index and order relevant plans on your behalf, and contact you to confirm your order.
- Step 6 Bring the original letter of authorisation and photo ID to the Collections desk of the VAC Reading Room and collect your records order. Please note: records will only be issued to the person who has obtained authorisation, and who has ordered the records.
- Step 7 At VAC view microfilm cards on the BSA reader printer in the microform area and print if required. Copies can be reproduced at A2, A3, A4 or ½ scale.
- Step 8 Prints cost \$0.95 each (includes GST) and are paid for at the VAC Copy desk.

Registration of Drawings - Understanding the BSA Database

The information below will assist you to search the registration numbers you will find in the BSA plan database. For detailed searching tips see the advice provided online with the database. You can access a list of drawing registration prefix letters and numbers, [online](#) or at a PROV Reading Room.

Imperial Section 1853 - 1972

Drawings created from 1853 to 1972 were controlled by a number of different registration systems.

Metric Series 1973 - 1998

After the metric system was introduced in 1973 drawing registration used the following format:
95 769 A1B

95 is the year in which the project was registered

769 is the number related to the project

A1 is the discipline code letter and the sheet number within that discipline.

Discipline Code letters are as follows: A Architectural, C Civil, Com Communications, E Electrical Services, F Fitment, FS Fire Service, FPS Fire Protection Services, H Hydraulic Services, K Equipment, L Landscape, LV Lifts, M Mechanical Services, R Relocatable, S Structural, Sec Security, Sd Standard Drawings, Su Survey

B is the amendments letter, used to indicate that a plan had been amended. When first amended the letter A was added, when a second amendment occurred the letter changed to B, and so on.

Standard Drawings

A Standard Drawing could be used for a number of different projects, for example, a classroom or a toilet block. Standard drawings exist in most disciplines, and were prefixed by Sd. The year was not included in the drawing number.

Survey Drawings

Survey drawings document surveys conducted by the Public Works Department and subsequent agencies as part of the design and construction of various buildings. The series prefix is Su. Plans are of feature surveys or detail surveys of building sites including levels and features, eg. buildings, pavements and pits. This series also contains plans of contour surveys.