

Family History

Electoral rolls

Electoral rolls list people eligible and registered to vote, whether at federal, state or local government elections. Electoral rolls can provide useful information, showing where a person may have lived over time.

What is the history behind the “right to vote”?

19th Century: a property qualification excluded some people from voting. Those who owned property in different electorates could vote in each.

Compulsory enrolment:

- From 1925, voting in Federal elections became compulsory for those over 21,
- and from 1973, for those over 18.

Women got the vote

In Australia women who were British subjects, and over 21 years, gained the right to vote in:

- South Australia 1894
- Western Australia 1899
- New South Wales 1902
- Tasmania 1903
- Queensland 1905
- Victoria 1908
- Australia (Commonwealth) 1902

Australian Aboriginal women and men were granted the right to vote in 1962.

Source: AUSFOLIO Volume 2, Number 1 SOCOM Educational Resources 1993.

For more information: <https://www.aec.gov.au/indigenous/milestones.htm>

What information is on the electoral roll?

Information on electoral rolls includes: full name, address, and, between 1903 and 1984, the voter’s occupation. **Note:** Electoral rolls may not be a real time image of where people were living, their occupation etc.

How are electoral rolls organised?

- **Check electoral maps for an electorate name.** Boundaries for an electorate change over time. For 19th century Queensland and New South Wales electoral boundaries there are State Archives’ guides at the level 3 desk. Post 1901 check Commonwealth of Australia 1901-1988 electoral redistributions book on level 3.
- **Until 1988:** rolls were arranged by state then by electorate, division and subdivision. Names were then organised alphabetically within the subdivision.
- **1989:** rolls were organised alphabetically within divisions by state.
- **From 1991:** rolls were organised alphabetically by name within each state.
- **Post 1901:** State Library holds Commonwealth Rolls: these are organised by state.

Some electoral rolls on CD-ROM (1903, 1913, 1922, 1941, 1949, 1959, 1969) allow more flexible searching e.g. by street, occupation etc. You may find a woman's married name if her given names are distinctive.

What are annotated electoral rolls and how can they be used?

Annotated electoral rolls are marked with:

- the new surname of a recently married woman
- change of address or
- date of notification of someone's death

As a result, these rolls can flag another electorate to search or approximately when someone died.

These electoral rolls are only held at:

- 1918-1968: National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au (Commonwealth electorates)
- 1915-1992: Queensland State Archives
<https://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/arts/heritage/archives> (State electorates)

What is the silent electoral roll?

It is compulsory to be on the electoral roll but not on the published list. Some examples of those not on the lists include people in witness protection programs, police undercover officers or victims of domestic violence.

For additional information on electoral history check the Australian Electoral Commission website <https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/history-of-electoral-reform.htm> or https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/25/theme1-voting-history.htm.

What electoral rolls are available at State Library of Queensland?

Most of the following resources can be viewed on level 3.

Queensland

- Microfilm – 1860-1900 State [MFL 324.94]. Ask for guide at level 3 desk.
- Microfiche – 1903-2008 Commonwealth [MFCS 324.94/q]
- CD-ROM – 1895, 1895, 1896, 1900, 1901. 1905, 1906, 1909, 1910, 1912, 1915 State AND 1903, 1906, 1913, 1922, 1934, 1941, 1949, 1959, 1969 Commonwealth [QCFS 324.6409943]
- Printed – 2012, 2014, 2015 State [S 324.94 003, level 4]. See staff to request from storage.

New South Wales

- Microfiche – 1824-64 [AO fiches 768-779 – ask for guide at level 3 desk] AND 1903-2008 [MFCS 324.94/n]
- CD-ROM – 1903 [QCFS 324.640994 2003-], 1913 State and 1935 Commonwealth [QCFS 324.6409944]

Victoria

- Microfiche – 1841-51 [MFCS 324.945 1994], 1899 [MFCS 324.6409945 1986], 1856; 1903-2008 [MFCS 324.6409945 1986].
- CD-ROM – 1903 [QCFS 324.640994 2003-]. 1939 [QCFS 324.6409945 2010]

Tasmania

- Microfilm – 1856-1900 (imperfect) [MFL 324.640946]
- Microfiche – 1914-2008 [MFCS 324.94 com/t]
- CD-ROM – 1903 [QCFS 324.640994 2003-]

South Australia

- Microfiche – 1991-2008 [MFCS 324.94 com/s]
- CD-ROM – 1909 [QCFS 324.640994 2003-] AND 1939, 1941, 1943 [QCFS 324.64099423 2010]

Western Australia

- Microfiche – 1901-2008 [MFCS 324.94 com/w]
- CD-ROM – 1901 [QCFS 324.640994 2003-] AND 1939, 1949 [QCFS 324.64099441 2010]

Australian Capital of Australia

- Microfiche – 1928-2008 [MFCS 324.94 com/a]

Northern Territory

- Microfiche – 1922-2008 [MFCS 324.94 com/nt]
- CD-ROM – 1884-1940 [QCFS 929.39429 2006]

New Zealand

- Microfiche – 1853-1874/75; 1880/81-1887; 1890; 1893-1894; 1896-1897; 1899-1900; 1902-1903; 1905/6; 1908; 1911; 1914; 1919; 1922; 1925; 1928; 1931; 1935; 1938; 1941; 1943; 1946; 1975; 1978; 1981 [MFCS 324.993].
See also *New Zealand Electoral Atlas* [FAMHIS 328.3345 1989]
- CD-ROM - 1881, 1893, 1896, 1911, 1935 [QCFS 929.393 2010]

Other resources

Queensland State Archives have digitised most of the state electoral rolls released prior to 1982.

- 1860 to 1900 are digitised and available online through ArchivesSearch catalogue (<https://www.archivessearch.qld.gov.au/>) by electoral district.
- 1901 to 1981 (digital format) and 1982 to 2016 are available onsite at Queensland State Archives.

Check **ancestryLibrary edition**, available at State Library, to search across Commonwealth electoral rolls for most states between 1903 and 1980.

Check **Findmypast**, available at State Library, to search a range of electoral rolls for all states and New Zealand, pre and post 1900.

For current electoral roll searches visit **Queensland Electoral Commission Brisbane office** <https://www.ecq.qld.gov.au/enrolment/enrol-or-update-your-enrolment> or your **local Australian Electoral Commission office** https://www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/About_Electoral_Roll/.

Need further information?

(07) 3840 7810 | slq.qld.gov.au/ask

© State Library of Queensland, 2025. Last updated June 2026



This guide is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-4.0) licence. You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this work, so long as you attribute State Library of Queensland. For more information see creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/