

The pastoral industry in the Northern Territory

Pastoralism and the Northern Territory

Over the past 150 years the Northern Territory has drawn part of its identity from the pastoral industry that operates across its rural expanses. Much of the 'Territorian' image derives from this industry.

Following John McDouall Stuart's 1861–62 crossing of the country from Adelaide to Point Stuart to the east of what is now Darwin, much emphasis was placed on the pastoral and agricultural potential of the lands that he had traversed. During the late nineteenth century a substantial part of the Territory was acquired by pastoralists under pastoral leases issued by the South Australian government, which administered the Northern Territory from 1870 until 1911. It was on these pastoral leases the Territory based much of its economic and social development.

The station 'community'

In a place where cities and towns are few and far between, the pastoral stations of the Territory have been not only valuable (and often the only) points for reference on a map, but have usually provided the community around which people have lived. They have been a place of employment, a place of residence, a place of birth and death, and a location for providing numerous government services, including education, health, welfare, census collection and law enforcement.

Records on the pastoral industry

The National Archives office in Darwin holds a range of records relating to the pastoral industry in the Territory. These include records relating to the issue and management of leases, investigations and reports into the leasehold system, as well as census and welfare records relating to Aboriginal people. Many records use the station as a location on which to focus dealings with people.

The stations of the Territory have a rich history and for many researchers records relating to the pastoral industry are an invaluable source of information not only for historical, social and economic studies, but for research into personal and family histories. Some of the major series of interest in the Darwin office of the National Archives are listed below.

Selected records relating to the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Miscellaneous volumes, files, and correspondence (Lands). Registers of pastoral leases, applications, purchases, rents etc.</u>	1869–1950	NTAC1973/13
<u>Correspondence files of the Northern Territory Administration. Contains files relating to NT pastoral properties, and the people living and working on and around them.</u>	1922–78	F1
<u>Correspondence files, Native Welfare Branch</u>	1946–90	F133
<u>Aboriginal Census files, alphabetical series by location</u>	1953–ongoing	E944
<u>Correspondence files, 'P' (pastoral) single number series. Contains files relating to employment and general welfare of Aboriginal people on pastoral properties.</u>	1954–62	E740
<u>Correspondence files, 'P' single number series (pastoral station files)</u>	1954–62	NTAC1976/5

Pastoral Leases Investigation Committee (PLIC), 1935 (CA 1098)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series number
<u>Correspondence files of the Chairman of PLIC (Chief Surveyor)</u>	1933–38	F48
<u>Copies of the reports of the PLIC. Contains details of each lease as it was at the time of the Investigation including information on stock numbers, bores etc, and usually a map.</u>	1935	F49
<u>Three volumes containing the original report of the PLIC</u>	1935	F50
<u>Photographic prints of the NT relating to the Report on Pastoral Leases by the Northern Territory PLIC</u>	1935	F1454

Maps and plans of pastoral leases

The National Archives Darwin office also holds maps and plans detailing pastoral leases in the Territory at different points in time. These are available for viewing in the reading room.