

Citing archival records

References to archival records differ from references to books or other types of published material. A book is a separate entity in its own right, with its own author and title, but an archival record is usually unpublished and is just one item in a series of items created or maintained by an agency or person. As far as possible, archives are kept in the same sequence and filing system in which they were created and maintained. Correct citations provide a guide to the origin as well as the location of the records.

As a minimum the citation for an archival record should refer to the *institution* holding the record, the *series number* of the record series to which the record belongs, and the *control symbol* (or *item number*).

Abbreviated citations

We recommend that you use the following abbreviated form of citation when preparing footnotes or captions:

1. The abbreviation 'NAA' (for National Archives of Australia) followed by a colon eg **NAA:**
2. The series number, followed by a comma eg **P1556,**
3. The control symbol (also referred to as the item number) eg **Heard Island
1954**

The complete abbreviated citation would be: **NAA: P1556, Heard Island 1954.**

If the item has no identifying control symbol but is simply identified as 'NN' (no number) or 'unnumbered' include the item title if possible (see 'Examples of citations' below).

If you want to cite a particular document located within a record item (a letter, report or photograph) do this by identifying the document and then citing the item on which it is held. Unless the record item is clearly cited, the National Archives is unable to retrieve it for later researchers (see 'Examples of citations' below).

Expanded citations

Sometimes it may be appropriate to give a more detailed citation – eg in a full bibliography, or if you are using only footnotes and no bibliography. In these cases we recommend that you use an expanded citation. An expanded citation includes the same elements as the abbreviated citation, with the addition of the following:

4. The full title 'National Archives of Australia' eg **National Archives of Australia:**
5. The name of the agency (or person) that created the record (to provide administrative context) eg **Antarctic Division;**
6. The series title and date range eg **P1556, Files containing Antarctic Station Reports with Station Log Books interspersed, chronological series, 1947–;**
7. The control symbol, item title and date range eg **Heard Island 1954, Heard Island 1954 Seal Sightings Log, 1954–55.**

The expanded citation, separating the main elements with a colon, then semicolons, would be:

National Archives of Australia: Antarctic Division; P1556, Files containing Antarctic Station Reports with Station Log Books interspersed, chronological series, 1947–; Heard Island 1954, Heard Island 1954 Seal Sightings Log, 1954–55.

Multiple items from the same series in an expanded citation

It is not necessary to repeat all elements of an expanded citation when referring to several items from the same record series when preparing a bibliography. We recommend the following format in these circumstances:

National Archives of Australia: Administrator, Northern Territory [II]; F1, Correspondence files, annual single number series, 1915–78; items
1937/375 Flying Doctor Barkly Tablelands, 1937
1940/360 Government aircraft – Flying Doctor, 1937–39

If a series was created by more than one agency, take care to cite the agency that corresponds to the date range of the item you are citing.

Where can you find these details?

You will find all the details you need for both an abbreviated and a full citation when you display the item details on [RecordSearch](#).

Examples of citations

The following examples may help you in preparing citations for different types of records in the National Archives collection.

1. Citation for an item contained in large correspondence file series

NAA: A461, AX314/1/1

Expanded citation: National Archives of Australia: Prime Minister's Department; A461, Correspondence files, multiple number series (third system), 1934–50; AX314/1/1, Aeronautical Research in the British Empire, 1945–49

2. Citation for an item that has no item number or item date range

NAA: A9663, Acton – Canberra House – residence for chauffeur

Expanded citation: National Archives of Australia: Australian Construction Services, Australian Capital Territory Regional Office; A9663, Aperture cards for ACT architectural plans and drawings, alphabetical series, 1921–59; Acton – Canberra House – residence for chauffeur

3. Citation for a series which consists of one item only

NAA: M266; one item only

Expanded citation: National Archives of Australia: Essington Lewis CH; M266, Report on a visit to USA, Canada, Great Britain and India, 1944–45: Aircraft and Munitions by Essington Lewis, JM McShane and JL Jenkins, 1944–45; one item only

4. Citation for a photograph

NAA: A1200, L25136

Expanded citation: National Archives of Australia: Australian News and Information Bureau, Canberra; A1200, Photographic negatives and prints, single number series with 'L' (Library) prefix, 1945–71; L25136, Royalty – Young fans welcome Queen Elizabeth the second on her arrival at Fairbairn airport, Canberra, ACT, 1954

5. Citation where the reference is to a document contained within a record item

NAA: A458, C502/3 part 2, letter to Prime Minister from Cardiff Branch, Unemployed Workers Movement, 26 February 1932

Expanded citation: National Archives of Australia: Prime Minister's Department; A458, Correspondence files, multiple number series, second system, 1923–34; C502/3 part 2, Unemployment relief – general, later papers in action part II, 1931–32; letter to Prime Minister from Cardiff Branch, Unemployed Workers Movement, 26 February 1932

Acknowledging the National Archives when you reproduce an item

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From the collection of the National Archives of Australia.

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