

Customs House, Sydney

There has been a customs house in Sydney since 1800 when Governor King first established that revenue from imported goods should be collected. However, it was not until 1885 that the building we know today as Customs House, Sydney was built. It opened in 1887 to commence over 100 years of service as the head office of the Collector of Customs in New South Wales.

When the Commonwealth Government took over the function of customs in 1901, Customs House, Sydney, continued to operate as the head office of New South Wales operations until 1988. It was finally closed down on 15 June 1990.

The changing face of Customs House

The National Archives office in Sydney holds a number of photographs, plans, and albums of newspaper cuttings which document the changes in Customs House and its place in the growth of Sydney in general.

Photographs, plans and newspaper cuttings

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>'Customs House' album of cuttings and photographs</u>	1827-1970	C4279
<u>Photographs, illustrations and negatives relating to Customs House, Sydney – (originals of some of the items in C4400 can be found in C4409, listed below)</u>	1831-1989	C4400
<u>Original large format photographs and lithographs of Customs House</u>	1840-1905	C4409
<u>Photographs from the Customs Library</u>	1850-ongoing	C956
<u>Etching of Customs House</u>	1850	C956,1
Photos of Customs House (5 photos)	1870, 1887, 1895, 1981, 1981	C956, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9
<u>Plans and drawings of Post Offices, Customs Houses, Army and Navy establishments, and Government House</u>	1861–1954	SP821/1
Plans – two alterations to 4th floor of Customs House	1948	SP821/1, FA157, Folder 146

<u>Albums of newspaper cuttings, chronological</u>	1895–1915	C4205
<u>Architectural plans of Customs House, Circular Quay, Sydney</u>	1916–34	C4280
<u>Photographs of Australian Government Analytical Laboratories, Customs House, Sydney</u>	1925–66	C4405
<u>Index to photographic negatives collected by Australian Customs</u>	1955–88	C4385
<u>Photographic Negatives from Customs Historical Collection</u>	1955–88	C4384

Documenting Customs House

Correspondence files relating to Customs House are also held. The information in these files documents the transfer of Customs House from State to Commonwealth ownership, work on the building, and the different uses to which the building was put. During its years of service a number of departments occupied Customs House, including the Department of Taxation and the Royal Australian Air Force.

Correspondence files

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Specifications, Director of Works</u>	1895–1950	SP155/1
Specifications for interior alterations	1908	SP155/1, NSW1192 MISC
Specifications for demolition and removal of air aid shelters	1946	Sp155/1, MISC19566H
<u>Correspondence – acquisition and sale of land and property by Commonwealth in NSW</u>	1901–48	SP394/1
Customs House, Sydney – construction	1901–02	SP394/1, 1902/16972
Customs House, Sydney – ownership	1905	SP394/1, 1905/00168
Customs House, Sydney – accommodation for departments	1902–07	SP394/1, B1907/685
Customs House – accommodation for departments	1903–09	SP394/1, B1909/2296
Customs House – accommodation for departments	1910–12	SP394/1, NL1912/2899
<u>Correspondence Files of the Chief Property Officer</u>	1920–57	SP228/1
NSW Customs House accommodation	1915–59	SP228/1, CL10526
<u>Correspondence re General Departmental Property</u>	1924–59	SP857/10
Rearrangement of accommodation	1940–42	SP857/10, PR/41/303

Eastern Area RAAF Map Section accommodation: 4th floor Customs House	1942	SP857/10, PR/42/675
Proposed accommodation, Newspaper and Paper Control Section of Division of Import Procurement	1944	SP857/10, PR/44/1186
Customs House: parking on square	1944–59	SP857/10, PR/44/1229
<u>Specifications, Director of works</u>	1947–53	SP277/1
Installation of electric light and power	1953	SP277/1, MISC22265/16
Compressed air and vacuum services in laboratories	1953	SP277/1, MISC22292/16
Heating and ventilation systems in laboratories	1953	SP277/1, MISC22301/16
<u>Files created by the Australian Customs Service</u>	1920–91	C4359
Customs House – proposals for future use	1960–73	C4359, N73/14435