

Index to New South Wales Registrations of Inventions, 1855–1884

New South Wales Registrations of Inventions and Patents

The NSW patents system was established by the Inventions Registration Act 1852, *'An Act to authorize the Governor General with the advice of the Executive Council to grant Letters of Registration for all inventions and improvements in the Arts or Manufactures to have the same effect as Letters Patent in England so far as regards this Colony.'*

At the time there was uncertainty as to whether the laws of the United Kingdom respecting patents extended to the colony of New South Wales.

The first NSW patents, known officially as Registrations of Inventions, were granted in 1855. The fee for registering an invention was £20. The Letter of Registration (in effect a patent, but the word patent was not used in the legislation or in other official documentation) provided 'exclusive enjoyment and advantage for a period of not less than seven years or more than fourteen years'. The Letters of Registration were generally for fourteen years.

In 1887 the Act was amended by the Patents Law Amendment Act of 1887, which reduced the fee to £5, introduced the term Letters Patent to replace Registration of Invention, established the office of the Examiner of Patents and authorised the removal of all the records from the office of the Supreme Court to the office of the Examiner of Patents.

The last registrations under the old legislation were in July 1887, and the first patents under the new Act were granted in August 1887, with a new numbering series. The last NSW patents were granted in 1905.

Notes on this index

This index includes all NSW Registrations of Inventions from the first in 1855 up to Application number 1560, which was the last to be granted in the year 1884. The index is compiled from information in a series of published volumes that contain indexes along with the complete specifications for all the individual inventions, arranged in order of Application number. The State Library of NSW has a set of ten volumes covering the period 1855 to 1884, and these were the source of most of the information in this index. This set of volumes is imperfect in that it omits all the information for Registrations in the year 1882, with Application numbers in the range 1027–1175. The State Library of Victoria has a similar, but also imperfect, set of volumes of NSW Registrations of Inventions. Fortunately it includes the details for the Registrations missing from the NSW set, and was the source of information to complete this index.

The index presented here is in order of Application number. The same number series was used for recording Assignments of Registrations as well as the Registrations, and

this accounts for most of the gaps in the series recorded in this index of Registrations. There were probably also a few cases of Applications that were received and given a number but failed to result in a grant of Registration.

The index here is a pdf document designed to be downloaded from the internet. It is searchable using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.

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Finding the specifications for patents listed in the index

The specifications for all the patents listed in the index are available in printed form in a set of bound volumes published by the NSW Government Printer. The most complete set is in ten volumes held by the State Library of NSW, but as noted above it is missing the 1882 patents. The library keeps the volumes off site so to see them it is necessary to make arrangements in advance. The specifications are arranged in each volume in order of the Application numbers. Following is a key to the contents of each volume:

Volume	Application numbers
1	1–62
2	63–122
3	123–217
4	218–341
5	343–561
6	563–788
7	789–900
8	901–1026
9	1176–1348
10	1349–1560

Other NSW patents records

The volumes indexed here appear to be the only published sets that present complete specifications, including drawings, of patented NSW inventions. For registrations after 1884 we have found no published sets of complete specifications.

However in 1891 the NSW Patents Office published volumes of indexes and ‘abridgements’ (shortened versions of the specifications, without drawings), for all the patents granted from 1855 to 1891, in two sets, corresponding to those granted under the original 1852 legislation and those granted under the 1887 legislation. Similar indexes were published for years 1898 to 1904. The State Library of New South Wales and some other libraries have copies of these.

All the records of the NSW Patent Office are now with National Archives in Canberra. Copies of some of the records are held also in the NSW office of National Archives. The records, with public access, include all the existing correspondence and specifications for NSW patents. A few of the records are available on line.

Facilitating access to early Australian patents information

As part of its Patents Project, ASHET is currently working with other organisations that share its interest in facilitating access to this large body of historical information, some of which has been published, but much not. Parts of the published information are available in several libraries and archives around Australia, most of which are open to the public. But all of the holdings are incomplete and imperfect, and in some cases are not conveniently catalogued. We aim to improve this situation by progressively digitising the information and making it available on line, as funds and resources become available to undertake the work.

The unpublished information is all with National Archives. It is our objective to have parts of these records also available online, to fill the gaps in the existing published material.