

How to Read Records

A wide range of types of records were created by various government and non government welfare organisations at different times in different jurisdictions. Gather some context and develop your understanding of why they were created, what they were used for and what kinds of information they can include. If you can closely 'read' records, you can often find keys to other files or documents you might be able to ask about and apply for access to. Below are some examples.

Record of transfer of a child to Turana Training Centre, 1965

– 'Remand Centre Turana record no 2325', Exhibit for Case Study 30, August 2015, Melbourne, URL: https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/DHS.3002.104.0052_E_R.pdf (accessed February 2025)

Blom B.

2325

RECORD'S COPY
No. **2325**

SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT
YOUTH WELFARE DIVISION

TRAINING DEMAND CENTRE TURANA

Surname	Christian Names	Date of Birth	Religion	File Number
		REDACTED 50?	S.D.A.	

Name and address of Parents
 Father: REDACTED Home: _____
 Mother: REDACTED Business: _____

Date of arrival **14/9/1965** Received from **Melbourne CC. (14/9/65)**
 By the hand of **Const J. GUY.**

Charge: **Attack & steal (2) Garage Truck & Steal.**

Remanded to: **Order to admit to the care of the Social Welfare Branch.** 1/19 for **Court Hearing Clinic Report Sentence**

Number of Counts	Homicide	Assaults	Robbery with Violence	Sex (a) Natural (b) Unnatural	Breakings	Larceny	Motor Vehicles	False Pretences	Care and Protection

Informant's name: **1/c G.A. HYDE. 13492** Station: **Turana**

Particular marks on body, etc. **Nil**

Cash: **Nil**
 Property: **Nil**
 Clothing: **Single Underpants, Cardigan, Shirt, Tie, Trousers, Shoes, Sox.**

Condition of Clothing: **dry.** Estimated value: **£0.00**

Signature of Young Person: _____
 Signature of Escorting Officer: **J. Guy**
 Signature of Receiving Officer: **J. Smith**

Have Parents been notified—Yes/No/Will be: **Probation Officer: Miss Louise - The boy receives psychiatric treatment. ? State of birth of Oscar, 1/1/65**

Religion - might there be church records?

Be alert to acronyms. Use Find & Connect to search for their meaning.

Ask why names have been redacted.

Details re charge - apply for police and court records.

Find out what this number means.

Is this a police station - were any records created there?

Mentions psychiatric treatment - might there be records of this?

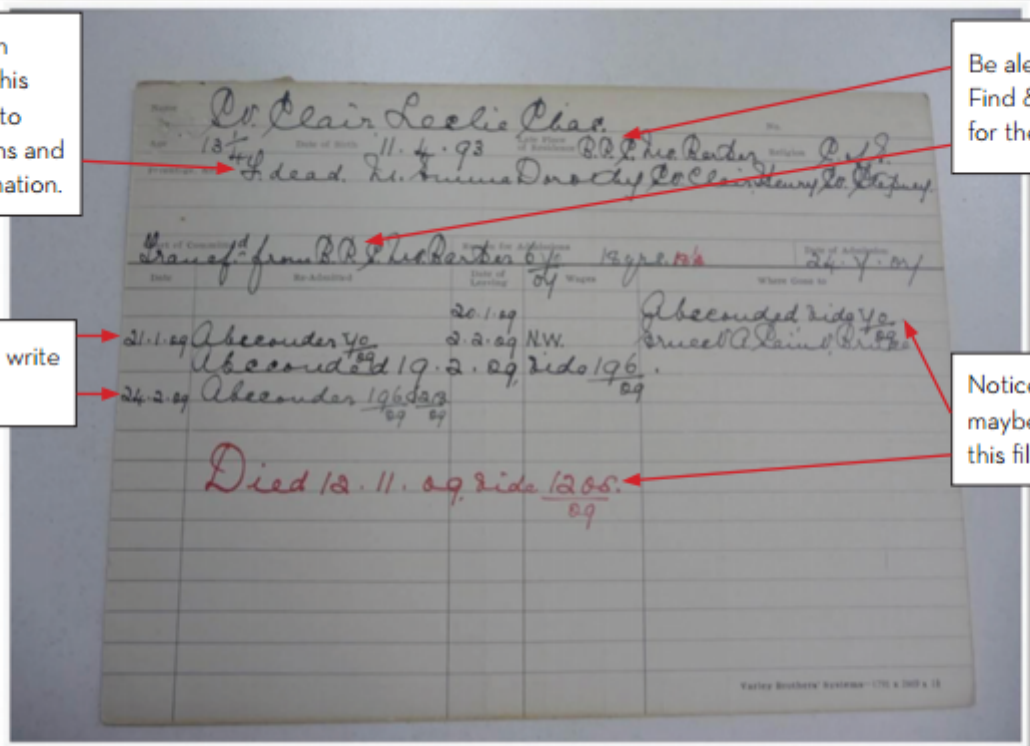
South Australian State Ward Index Card, 1907-1909 – courtesy State Records of SA
 – courtesy State Records of SA

Note information about child and his family - use this to find births, deaths and marriages information.

Be alert to acronyms. Use Find & Connect to search for their meaning.

Use the dates to write up a chronology.

Notice file references - maybe you can apply for this file.



- Government files tend to be created in 'reverse date order' and should be read from back to front. Each new folio or document page was placed on a file on top of the previous one, so that the oldest document is at the back, and the newest at the front of the file.
- Request that all documents are copied with file covers and full references so you know what the record you have is.
- Go to the State & National Archives records' descriptions, or use Find & Connect records' descriptions to understand who created a record or document and what its purpose was.
- Read between the lines – notice references to other documents, names of people, places, dates and events. Use these keys to apply for further records.
- Note the names of institutions, the names of staff and the name of the department/organisation at the time – these may also hold keys to further information.

You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/for-record-holders/how-to-read-records/>