

RURAL ADDRESSING IN FLINDERS SHIRE

The original set of new urban and rural addressing standards, AS/NZS 4724:2000, was developed by an international panel of surveyors and map experts appointed by the Australian and New Zealand governments before the year 2000. The most recent version of the addressing standard is AS/NZS 4818:2011.

Flinders Shire updated the urban addressing in the towns of Hughenden, Prairie and Torrens Creek in 2002. Nothing effective was done about rural addressing until the subject was raised again in May 2014. Council then decided to catch up with other shires in Queensland and by 2020 we have successfully updated and geo-coded all except a few of our rural addresses.

In Queensland, the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, (DNMRE), collects address data from shires and adds it to a database called the QAMF before passing it on to the federal government for updating Australia's G-NAF database.

WHY WE NEED THE NEW ADDRESS SYSTEM

The new address system is more suitable for computer databases. Government departments, emergency services and utilities like Ergon or Telstra are heavily reliant on computer databases. With the increased use of car and truck GPSs and mobile phones with navigation apps more ordinary people are using databases even if they're not aware of it. Now that we have the new address system almost fully implemented it should be easier for emergency services and businesses like road transport or other visitors to find your property in an efficient and timely manner when they need to.

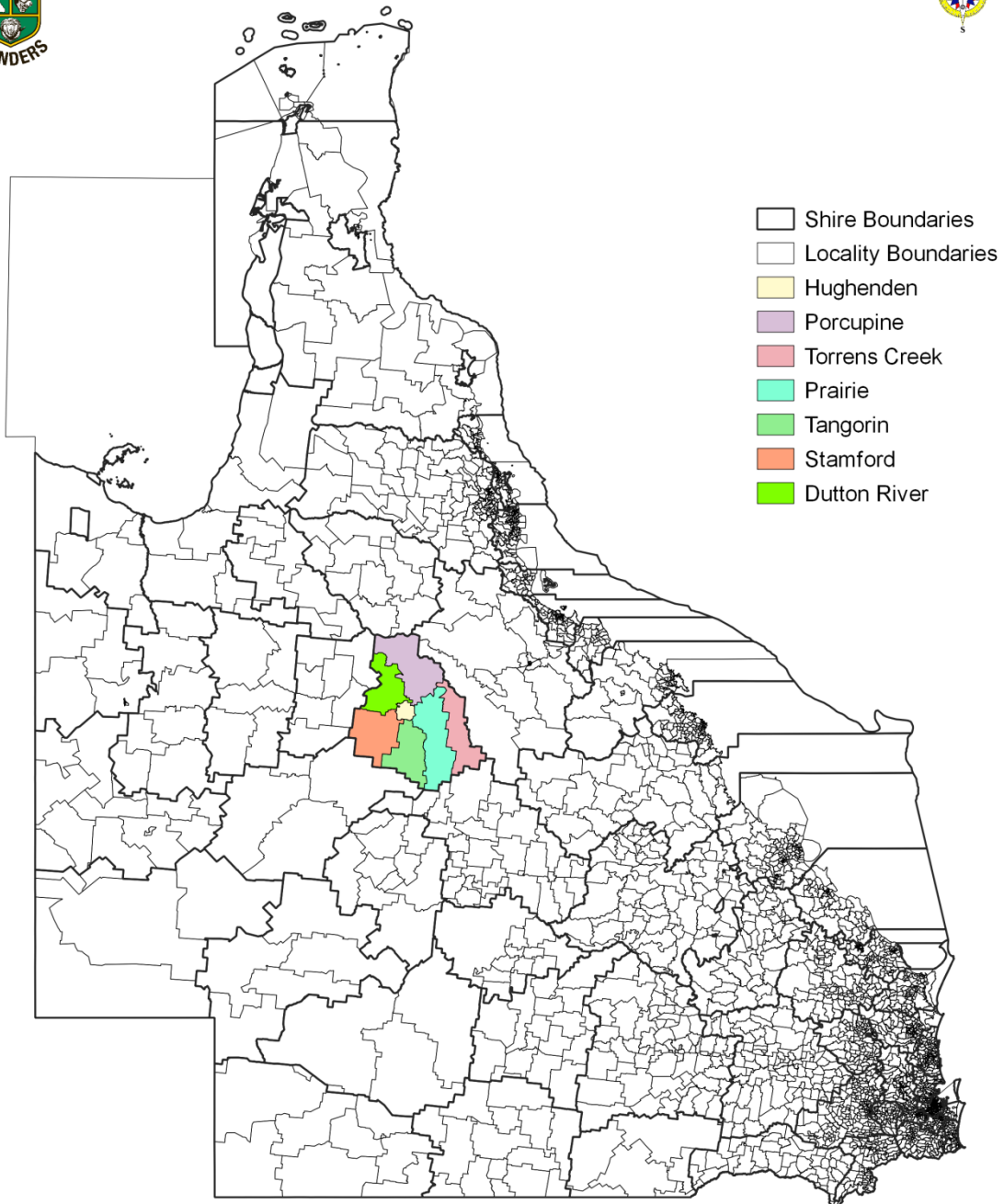
The need for a new address system was seen around the world as far back as the late 1980s and early 1990's with the increasing use of computers, satellites and GPS devices. Other technically advanced countries have already modernised their addressing systems.

The Australian postcode system is great for sorting mail but unfortunately it is not easily mappable. For example, the eastern side of Flinders Shire shares the same postcode as some areas on the Cassowary Coast and even Palm Island. It is possible to have more than one road or street with the same name in the same postcode area. For example there are lots of 'Main Streets' and 'The Esplanades' and so on. That has led to a few problems with people getting the wrong mail and even emergency services being directed to the wrong location. Also, some station property names are quite popular and may be shared by quite a number of rural properties scattered all around Queensland and elsewhere in Australia.

If you have ever needed to ring triple zero you may have had the unpleasant experience of having them ask you the exact spellings for each component of your address. That can seem like an annoying waste of time when you need help immediately and your time might be better used dealing with the emergency. The triple zero operators have a difficult job. It is best for them to make sure they have your address exactly right than to waste the emergency services time by sending them to an incorrect or non-existing address.

UNIQUE ADDRESS

With the new system, the combination of your Road Number, Road Name and Locality is the minimum requirement to give you a unique address in Queensland. That's less information needed to locate you in an emergency. Your full address should still include your property name and other information such as your postcode, which is still required for mail. It's a good idea to include your state as well.



Queensland has 74 shires divided up into 3383 localities and suburbs. Flinders Shire localities are highlighted.

LOCALITIES AND SUBURBS

There are 3383 suburbs and localities in Queensland. Each locality and suburb has been carefully named so that they are all spelled differently and they all sound as different as possible when spoken. Locality boundaries are mappable and they do not cross shire boundaries. We have seven localities in Flinders Shire: Hughenden, Porcupine, Torrens Creek, Prairie, Tangorin, Stamford and Dutton River.

RURAL NUMBERING IS BASED ON ROAD MAPPING

According to Queensland's Local Government Act of 2009, shires must keep an up to date road register and corresponding map of all public and private roads within their shire boundary. In Flinders Shire, our rural road centre lines and private property access roads were surveyed and mapped in 2001 by Brazier & Motti. The shire's director of engineering, Mr Don Lee, worked with our rural lands GIS map maker Cody Herrod to produce our 2010 road register spreadsheet along with the required road map. Under the new standards we are not allowed to have more than one street or road with the same name within any suburb or locality.

The number you see on your rural number post generally depends on the distance from the start of the public road, (as specified in the Shire Road Register), to the entrance of your private property. If your property is on a road which starts in another shire then the road could have been counted from the other shire instead. The road naming and numbering needs to be consistent across shire boundaries to comply with the standards.

LOCATION OF RURAL NUMBER POSTS

When the private property entrance is relatively close to the public road the rural address number posts are mostly placed about 13m, (or one road train trailer length), past the turnoff and about 3m, (or a trailer width), in from the travelled path. That way traffic from both directions should be able to see the number post in time to decide if they need to turn or not. Road trains should be able to turn around them without any problems.

Odd numbers are on the left and even numbers are on the right. That is useful to know when somebody is looking for an address number and they don't have a GPS. If someone starts to feel lost or a bit confused, they only need to find one rural number post. Depending if the number is odd or even they can determine which way the road numbering runs and decide whether or not they are heading the right direction. By simple math they can also work out exactly how far they have to go.

The rural addressing standards say the rural address post is meant to go near the 'access point', or entrance to private property. Some properties have their road maintained by the shire for some distance from their turnoff, especially if their road runs across or along a state government 'DRA', (Dedicated Road Area). According to DNRME's publication 'Roads Under the Land Act 1994', "*Land dedicated as road is an area set aside for the use of the travelling public.*" Regardless of whether or not an actual formed road has been constructed and regardless of whether or not a land holder has a PTO, (Permit To Occupy), it's still an area of land owned by the state and legally open to the public to use as a road. That's the reason why some of our rural address posts are located some distance away from a main road or a major shire road. Even if the property has a mail box at their turnoff, a mailbox doesn't legally determine the ownership of land. (If you think so then I have a nice bridge to sell you). We couldn't always put the rural address posts near people's mailboxes and still be in compliance with the rural addressing standards. It is okay for people to write their rural address number on their mailbox though if they want to.



All outback shires in Queensland have some 'undedicated roads', and Flinders Shire is no exception. Some roads have not changed much since the days of horses and wagons, drovers, shearers and swagmen. In the old days it was important to travel between watering places or from homestead to homestead. Well worn tracks eventually became roads and after a while their maintenance was taken up by the council. In many cases, these roads naturally followed the best ground and are still the most practical lines for roads to follow today. A few of our publically maintained shire roads still pass through the middle of private properties and some stations even have traffic passing right in between the house yards and sheds.

According to Flinders Shire's Local Law No.10 (Roads) an "undedicated road" means a local government road in which the land is not dedicated for public use as a road." But according to the Queensland Local Government Act 2009, "A private road is a road over land that is owned by a person who may lawfully exclude other persons from using the road."

The rural addressing standards say the number post is supposed to be at the property entrance where the public road ends and the private road begins. But the standards also state that the number posts "need to uniquely and clearly identify each address site, and enable it to be readily located".

Given the historic circumstances and the legislative conflicts outlined above it seems the most reasonable compromise on some properties is for the rural number post to be located near the house yard gate or the turnoff to the car port instead of at their property's main entrance gate, grid or turnoff.

TYPE OF RURAL NUMBER POST

The rural address number posts chosen by Flinders Shire are blue guide posts with a white plastic cap. They have black numbers on a white reflective background. They look different from other kinds of roadside signs, they are relatively inexpensive, they are quick to install. They can be pulled out again with a little effort and they can be re-used. If they get knocked over it's easy to stand them back up again. They are 'frangible', meaning they are strong enough to hold up under normal conditions but are able to be bent over easily on impact. They need to be frangible because some of our address posts are installed in the 'clearway' within 6m of the edge of the road for better visibility. There are laws about what kind of objects we can put in a clearway. Guide posts are allowed there because they are frangible.

THREE KINDS OF SIGNS FOR RURAL ADDRESSING

Just as there are three components of your unique address as mentioned on page one, there are three kinds of signs to match the three address components. The rural address number post, the rural road name signs and the locality name signs are all supposed to work together for rural addressing to work properly.

LOCALITY SIGNS

Shires are supposed to put locality name signs where roads cross locality boundaries as part of rural addressing so that people know when they are entering or leaving any locality and become familiar with the locality names.

ROAD NAME SIGNS WITH ADDRESS RANGES ON THEM

Address number ranges can be seen on the street name signs in Hughenden, Prairie and Torrens Creek and other towns in Queensland. Flinders Shire will eventually upgrade our rural road name fingerboard signs to match our urban street name signs. Road name fingerboard signs with rural number ranges on them help drivers decide which way to turn at an intersection if they don't have a GPS and they are looking for a rural address number.



PURPOSE OF THE ROADNAME SIGN AND RURAL ADDRESS POST

The road name signs with address ranges on them point you in the right direction.

The rural number posts are to tell you when you have found the recommended entrance to the property you are looking for.

If you have travelled the expected distance along a road and you cannot see the rural number post you are looking for it might mean something is wrong. Maybe you have simply missed the post and gone too far or maybe you have taken a wrong turn. At least you will begin to suspect something is wrong right away before you get further bushed and possibly waste a lot of time and fuel.

WHERE WE ARE AT NOW AND PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Flinders Shire had 1339 urban addresses registered with DNRME since 2002.

In May 2015 we put out the first twenty experimental rural number posts in the north of the shire. It only took one day to drive around and install all twenty of them. Almost six months passed with no complaints about the first twenty experimental rural addressing posts.

In October 2015 another 188 rural number marker posts arrived and it took about two weeks to drive around 2600 km on the shire's roads to hammer them all in. Work was stopped just before it would have been completed due to a number of complaints.

Between October 2018 and January 2019 we pulled up all the number posts we installed previously and upgraded them with two sided white plastic caps with larger number stickers and moved closer to the road for better visibility. They are reinforced with star pickets driven deep into the ground for better support. This time we installed a total of 268 rural address number posts and it took 31 working days to get the work done.

In March 2019 we registered 264 rural addresses with DNRME.

In November 2019 we worked with DNRME and adjoining shires to agree on how to address properties around shire boundary lines where the entrance or 'access point' of the property is in one shire but the house is in another shire.

In December 2019 all the rural properties were geo-coded on their building centroids. Some properties have more than one house and the different houses can be a long distance from each other so they might want both houses to have separate addresses. A few properties requested their stock yards be addressed separately. Some properties have stock yards many miles from the main house. By having the yards addressed and geo-coded separately the ambulance won't need to waste time detouring by the main house first if somebody gets injured at the yards. Geo-coding promotes better business efficiency as well. Car and truck GPS devices will eventually begin to work properly around Flinders Shire, (when they get the updates). People you do business with such as road train operators, vets, back packers, visitors and so on will be able to find your property faster and more efficiently with a GPS in future.

Addressing will be an ongoing project as the shire is always changing. New roads and streets are always being constructed, and existing roads sometimes get new alignments. Flinders Shire has agreed to provide DNRME with monthly updates on our address database along with quarterly updates on our road mapping.

We're still working on new addresses for a few more urban and rural properties. There are just a few anomalies concerning the road register and corresponding road mapping. We



apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, we are are working on these issues and we expect to be able to resolve them soon.

DNRME is helping us with some undedicated roads and roads off alignment problems which have existed since historic times.

We're working with DNRME on the creation of a new locality named 'Marathon', on both sides of the Flinders Highway between Hughenden and Richmond.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON URBAN AND RURAL ADDRESSING

If you want to learn a little about urban and rural addressing, here are some online resources that you may find interesting.

[Triple zero \(000\)](#) – Australian Government

[How addresses are determined](#) – Queensland Government, (DNRME).

[The impact of missing or incorrect addresses](#) - by P Pudney and G White - 2016

[Providing Certainty in Addressing – A Street Addressing Standard for Australia and New Zealand](#) - by Anselm Haanen and Brian Goodchild

If anybody is really interested you can purchase your own copy of the standard [AS/NZS 4819-2011](#) from SAI Global for only around \$199 per copy.

To understand rural addressing even more you should also read the [Queensland Local Government Act 2009](#) chapter on roads, and '[Roads Under The Lands Act 1994](#)'. From DNRME.

Our [Flinders Shire Road Register](#) and our [Flinders Shire Road map](#) can both be seen in our Flinders Shire Council website.

Last updated 02/03/2020