

About Land Surveying in Western Australia

1. What is a Licensed (Registered) Surveyor?

A Licensed surveyor has been assessed as being professional and competent in the application of land tenure laws and regulations, and possess the ability to perform cadastral surveys by the Land Surveyors Licensing Board of Western Australian (LSLB). To be deemed competent the Surveyor must hold a tertiary qualification, have gained the required practical experience, have passed a series of Board examinations and comply with continuing professional development requirements set by LSLB.

2. Why is Land Surveying important?

Land Surveyors are a crucial link in the land development process. Without them we would be unsure of where to build structures and the infrastructure needed to support them.

They work closely with other professions in the building and development industry, such as architects, designers, geologists, builders and engineers to determine what is possible on any given site.

3. How much does a Land Survey cost?

The cost of a survey depends on a number of factors:

- Location and complexity of the work.
- The type and accuracy of information required.
- Access and topography of the land.
- Existing cadastral information on the area.
- Government application and lodgement fees.

Ausurv Surveyors provides competitive, professional and accurate surveying services and can tailor a solution and budget to your needs.

Please contact our office for a quote or estimate on (08) 9583 5511.

Land Development in Western Australia

Land owners, developers and builders often ask us questions about how to unlock the capital potential and equity growth of subdivisions.

Below are questions and information answering the fundamentals of land subdivision in WA. With this base knowledge please contact us (9583 5511) for help with your subdivision project.

4. How long will a subdivision take?

Each site is different. Timeframes and requirements will be unique, depending on what exists and what is being created on the block, the type of subdivision, and the workload of the authorities that need to approve the subdivision. Most projects take a minimum of 6 to 12 months from start to finish.

5. How much does a subdivision cost?

Subdivision costs depends on what exists and what is being created on the block. This determines the work needed to be done on site, the cost for our surveying work and the fees incurred with relevant authorities such as Water Corporation, Western Power and Local Government. If you know what you intend to do on your property and need a specific indication of the costs and issues involved, please contact our office for a quote or more information on (08) 9583 5511.

6. What is a Green Title Subdivision, a Survey-Strata Subdivision, and what is the difference?

A Green Title is the name given to a traditional block of land that is completely independent from its neighbouring lots and gives the owner total autonomy, the lot is fully serviced and the owner has the greatest degree of freedom. A Survey Strata allows the creation of 'vacant' strata lots. A Strata Title is part of a group of two or more lots forming a Strata Scheme, which has a Strata Company over it and is subject to the rules of the Strata Title Act.

The difference: Green Title lot subdivision approvals can be more difficult to achieve as the WAPC and local councils can be more rigid in interpreting the subdivision rules and impose more conditions. As the lot is required to be fully serviced, it must have direct access to sewer and water mains and underground power, in some cases this can dramatically increase the subdivision costs.

Survey Strata lots have less restrictions in regard to servicing and WAPC approvals. The lot services can be connected through other Survey-Strata lots to the service mains. The creation of a common property lot, usually along a side boundary, allows it to be used as an access and service corridor. The maintenance and upkeep of any common property lots is the responsibility of all strata lot owners.

7. What is a Built Strata Subdivision?

This type of subdivision is ideal if you plan to build several buildings on your development. These can be a simple duplex, multi storey complex or commercial units or offices. However, you will need to have all the new buildings completed, including landscaping, fencing, letterboxes and crossovers, before titles can be issued, usually there no vacant lots are allowed (WAPC referral is needed for vacant lots). A Building Strata is usually the easiest way to subdivide your block and the cheapest way to subdivide in terms of surveying costs. It's important, however, to weigh this up against the need to complete the entire development before titles can be issued. In the Build Strata process Western Australian Planning Commission approval is usually not required, and the development is controlled by the building approvals from the local council.

8. The difference between a Built Strata & Survey Strata.

Built Strata

A Built Strata contains buildings which make up the boundaries of the land parcel with the Strata Plan showing the buildings and agreed part lot boundaries that are defined by fences, driveways and other monuments on the property.

Survey Strata

A Survey Strata is defined by survey marks placed by a licensed land surveyor. The Survey Strata Plan does not show any buildings and is very similar to a freehold land parcel.

How Do I Know Which Strata Scheme I Need?

Generally speaking a Built Strata is used for multiple dwellings where one unit is on top of another whereas a Survey Strata is for single tier developments where lots are side by side only.

Every case is different but Built Stratas are recommended for developments that have brand new dwellings as the builder will complete all of the service connections and the strata units are unlikely to change in the future.

Survey Strata is useful for developments that are retaining an existing dwelling as it is easier to change or demolish the dwelling in the future through a Survey Strata scheme.

Another reason for a Survey Strata is that banks prefer the security of 1 dwelling per parcel of land when providing mortgages.

A Built Strata plan cannot be completed until the buildings are finished and will require 2 or more dwellings on one title which means that the dwellings cannot be sold individually until the strata titles are created. If the land is subdivided first as a Survey Strata then the (a single-tier only) building can take place on individual titles therefore providing more security and equity for the bank.

Need Approval?

Survey Strata subdivisions require approval from the WAPC and local and state government authorities such as Western Power and the Water Corporation.

A Built Strata has already received approval from local and state authorities through the building process and will only require additional approval from the local authority to ensure that they meet the building requirements of the WA Building Commission.

Please note... Built Stratas of more than 5 lots or with a total land area greater than 2500m² or if they are commercial developments, require WAPC approval but in most cases this is delegated to the Local Authority.

Another Important Point

Both types of strata require a unit entitlement to be determined by a licensed valuer. The unit entitlement is the relative proportion of each owners share in the strata scheme and determines the voting rights of the owner, the share of common property and the proportion of contributions and costs to be paid towards the up keep and management of the strata scheme.

9. Freehold (Green Title) & Survey Strata Subdivision Process

Below is an overview of both the planning and survey parts of the process. Please contact us with any questions you may have.

Planning Process

1. The subdivision requires planning approval from the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC). Therefore, we will need to carry out a contour or feature survey, prepare an application plan and submit an application to the WAPC, which takes approximately three months to be determined. This survey will locate all existing dwellings and improvements on the property and enable us to create a subdivision design which will maximise the full potential of the property.
2. If the parent lot is in a bushfire prone area, a bushfire assessor needs to provide a bushfire management plan to go with the WAPC application form and plan.
3. The WAPC refers the application out to various authorities for comment, eg. Local authority, Water Corporation, Western Power (hence the three month time frame).
4. If there are no difficulties or objections, then the WAPC will issue a subdivision approval which will be subject to certain conditions.

Survey Process

1. Following receipt of the WAPC approval, we can carry out the field survey to subdivide the lot.
2. The next step is office calculations, Field Book preparation and drafting of the Subdivision Plan to show the new lots and common property.
3. We will then arrange for a Licensed Valuer to determine the Unit Entitlement for each Survey Strata only lot.
4. Attend to clearance requests for the various WAPC conditions. At this point, you will need to pay the various costs involved and carry out the works required to fulfil the conditions.
5. Following collection of the clearances, we will arrange for the Subdivision Plan to receive final endorsement from the WAPC.
6. Once the Subdivision Plan has been signed off by the WAPC, we will lodge the Plan with Landgate.
7. Shortly thereafter, you will be able to apply for new titles. We advise that you engage a conveyancer or settlement agent to attend to this aspect.

10. Built Strata Subdivision Process

A Built Strata will have already received approvals from both local and state authorities during the building process.

This means only an additional approval from the local authority is needed to ensure the subdivision meets the building requirements of the WA Building Commission.

However, Built Stratats with more than 5 lots or with a total land area greater than 2500m² or if they are commercial developments, require WAPC approval but in most cases this is delegated to the Local Authority.

The Process

1. Request survey search from Landgate.
2. Advise on any aspects of the land tenure which may impact on the subdivision. A draft Strata Plan may be needed.
3. Establish boundary alignments as per Licensed Surveyor regulations.
4. Measure buildings for drafting of Strata Plan (SP).
5. Request unit entitlement valuation from a Licensed Valuer.
6. Draft Strata Plan (SP) prepared in accordance with Licensed Surveyor regulations and Landgate requirements.
7. Examine Strata Plan and lodge at Landgate for auditing.
8. Prepare Form BA15 upon examination of the dwellings by your registered building surveyor and forward to Local Authority for completion. Prepare other forms and fees for local government.
9. We will notify you when the Strata Plan is In Order for Dealings to allow you to engage a settlement agent or solicitor to create new land titles.

11. I am already part of a Strata Scheme and I want to subdivide my lot, what can I do?

You cannot have a mixed strata scheme, it is either a Built Strata or a Survey Strata and therefore must re-subdivide under the same type of strata as currently exists. The Strata Company (owner of all the lots) must approve any re-subdivision.

12. I am intending to build several units/residences on one Survey Strata lot; what should I do?

You can only re-subdivide under Survey Strata and you will require the permission of the entire Strata scheme. Under Survey Strata you cannot have multi-tier strata lots, only single tier (side by side).

13. I am already part of a Strata scheme and I want to convert to a Green Title, can I?

This depends on the entire strata scheme meeting green title requirements under the current zoning, and the individual lots to be created meeting the requirements.

If the requirements are met, then it is possible to change. It may not be feasible to change as the requirements for this conversion requires the complete separation of all services (water, power, sewer etc) so that no lot accesses a service via another lot. It also requires the consent of the entire existing scheme.

Building & Construction, Lease surveys & Boundary Re-pegs / Idents in Western Australia

These FAQ'S are for those building and constructing, needing to reference their land boundaries or commercial and retail tenancies needing lease surveys.

14. Will I be able to use my Feature & Contour Survey with any builder and / or Architect?

Most definitely. Our surveys are detailed and are produced in a variety of formats to meet a range of CAD packages.

15. Why do the boundaries need to be surveyed before erecting a boundary wall, fence or commencing building works?

Having an authorised survey completed by a Licensed Surveyor to define your boundary will avoid any potential construction and/or approval issues.

16. Does the Contour and Feature Survey include the Cadastral or Boundary / Ident Survey?

No, the cadastral survey is a separate survey to re-establish the Title boundary corners. It is usually carried out just prior to construction commencing.

17. What are feature and level surveys?

These surveys detail all information about the property, such as adjoining properties, features in the street, anything and everything that is required by your local council to modify or develop your property and land. The survey information can be used by council, architects and builders; from this they can determine ground level, contours, existing structures, adjoining structures, fences, utility services, drains and trees, just to name a few.

All these have a bearing on what is possible in terms of design, building, land development and subdivision. It's vital to have a feature survey done first to avoid disappointment and costly mistakes later during the building process.

18. What is a re-establishment survey?

A re-establishment survey is done when a lot or property boundary needs to be redefined.

Re-establishment survey results are marked or pegged in the ground as well as shown on the Certificate of Title. This will leave no doubt with the property owner and neighbours about where their boundaries lie.

You may need this type of survey for:

- Improvements to a house or building on or near the boundary
- Improvements to a fence or retaining wall
- Establish exact boundaries for strata title purposes
- Double check boundaries when buying or selling (particularly old properties)
- Detailed survey of property is required by local council

19. What are Lease Area Surveys?

Lease Area Surveys measure the area of land or space within a building. This area becomes the basis for determining the rental value of the premises or land under the terms of a lease agreement.

Why Is A Lease Area Survey Needed?

Lease Area Surveys may be required:

- To comply with the legal requirements of the Property Council of Australia, which can cover long-term or high-value leases
- To avoid owner-tenancy disputes over land / area use for the period of the lease. Put simply, as a tenant you only want to pay for the area you occupy, and as an owner or agent you only want to lease a specific area, and incorrectly quoted areas can easily lead to costly disputes or litigation
- For forward business planning regarding costs and uses. Again, a small miscalculation of a leased area can have a significant impact over a 10 year period