Cadastral Surveying: What is it and why do we need it?

Survey Documents

The diagram is the fundamental registerable document prepared by the land surveyor. The essential information shown on a diagram is:

- The unique designation of the property.
- An illustration depicting the property.
- The boundary description listing the corner beacons and the details of any curvilinear boundary.
- Descriptions of the corner beacons.
- A table listing the numerical data of the boundaries.
- The area of the property.

The Surveyor-General gives each diagram a unique reference number.

The most common type of diagram is a **subdivisional diagram**. This is framed for the purpose of cutting off a portion of a parent property. There are other types of diagram however, including:

- Servitude diagrams for registering servitudes over an existing property;
- Lease diagrams for registering long leases over portions of properties;
- Consolidation diagrams when it is required to consolidate several individual properties into one, taking out certificates of consolidated title;
- Mineral diagrams to register mineral rights separately from the land rights; and
- Mining title diagrams for registering the right to extract minerals from the land.

With the exception of mining title diagrams, which are registered with the Department of Minerals and Energy, these diagrams are registered together with their deeds in a deeds registry.

To view an example of a subdivisional diagram, [click here](#).

In the case of the subdivision of a piece of land into a number of pieces the land surveyor usually prepares a **general plan** instead of individual diagrams.

This is a document showing the relative position of two or more pieces of land together with the same essential information in respect of each piece as is required on a diagram. It is also allocated a unique reference number by the Surveyor-General. It is compulsory to prepare a general plan for any subdivision into ten or more pieces of land and when required, in terms of any law, usually for township establishment or the amendment of an existing general plan. General plans may comprise many sheets and depict a very large number of erven (lots).

To view an example of a small general plan, [click here](#).

Survey Records

When submitting the diagrams and general plans framed from his/her survey, a land surveyor is obliged also to lodge the records of that survey with the Surveyor-General. These records are used to support the examination process and are then preserved in the Surveyor-General’s office. Land surveyors later refer to these records when relocating or replacing lost beacons and when extending the earlier survey. The principal records kept by the Surveyor-General are:
The field observations, which are the primary record of the survey,
A list of co-ordinates of the beacons and reference stations,
A working plan,
A plan on which is shown the comparison between the original and the new survey data, and
The land surveyor's report.

These records are now being captured in the document imaging system (DIS) for easier access and to facilitate the supply of information to land surveyors.