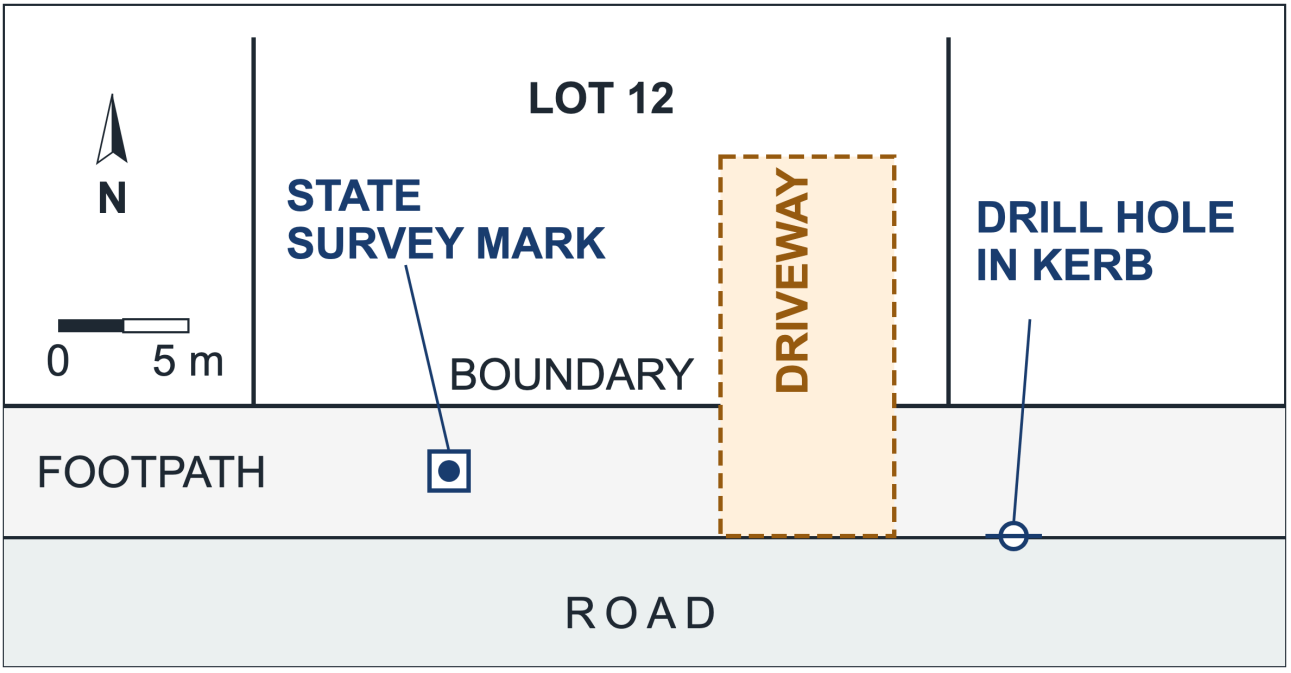
SURVEY MARKS IN NSW: THE MARKS OUTSIDE YOUR WOLLONGONG HOME AND WHY THEY MATTER

By Wollongong Surveyors · 2026-11-24



Survey marks in NSW are the small fixed points surveyors use to measure where things are: a numbered disc set in the footpath, a pin in the ground, a drill hole cut into the kerb. They tie your property boundaries and the height of your land to the state's survey network, and the law protects them. Nobody may remove, damage or move one without the Surveyor-General's authority.

If you are planning a driveway, fence, retaining wall or footpath job in Wollongong or the Illawarra, the time to deal with a mark is before the work starts. Finding and protecting it takes a records check, a look at the frontage and, where a mark is in the way, a Surveyor-General approval. Damaging it without approval can mean a penalty, a repair bill and a delayed job.

General information only, not legal advice. Spatial Services, Surveyor-General's Directions and Wollongong City Council pages checked 24 November 2026.

Key takeaways

- There are two main kinds of survey mark in NSW: permanent survey marks, which carry a position and height, and cadastral reference marks, which reference and define property boundaries (Spatial Services).
- You can look up permanent survey marks on SCIMS Online by address, Lot/DP or suburb, after registering a free Spatial Collaboration Portal account.
- Section 24 of the Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002 says no one may remove, damage, destroy, displace, obliterate or deface a survey mark without the Surveyor-General's authority. The maximum penalty is 25 penalty units.
- If works could affect a mark, the application for Surveyor-General approval goes in at least 14 days before the mark is disturbed. Spatial Services says to allow 10 working days for a response.
- Check the footpath, kerb and gutter in front of your block before you design a driveway or fence, and bring in a registered land surveyor early.

What a survey mark is, and the kinds you may see outside your home

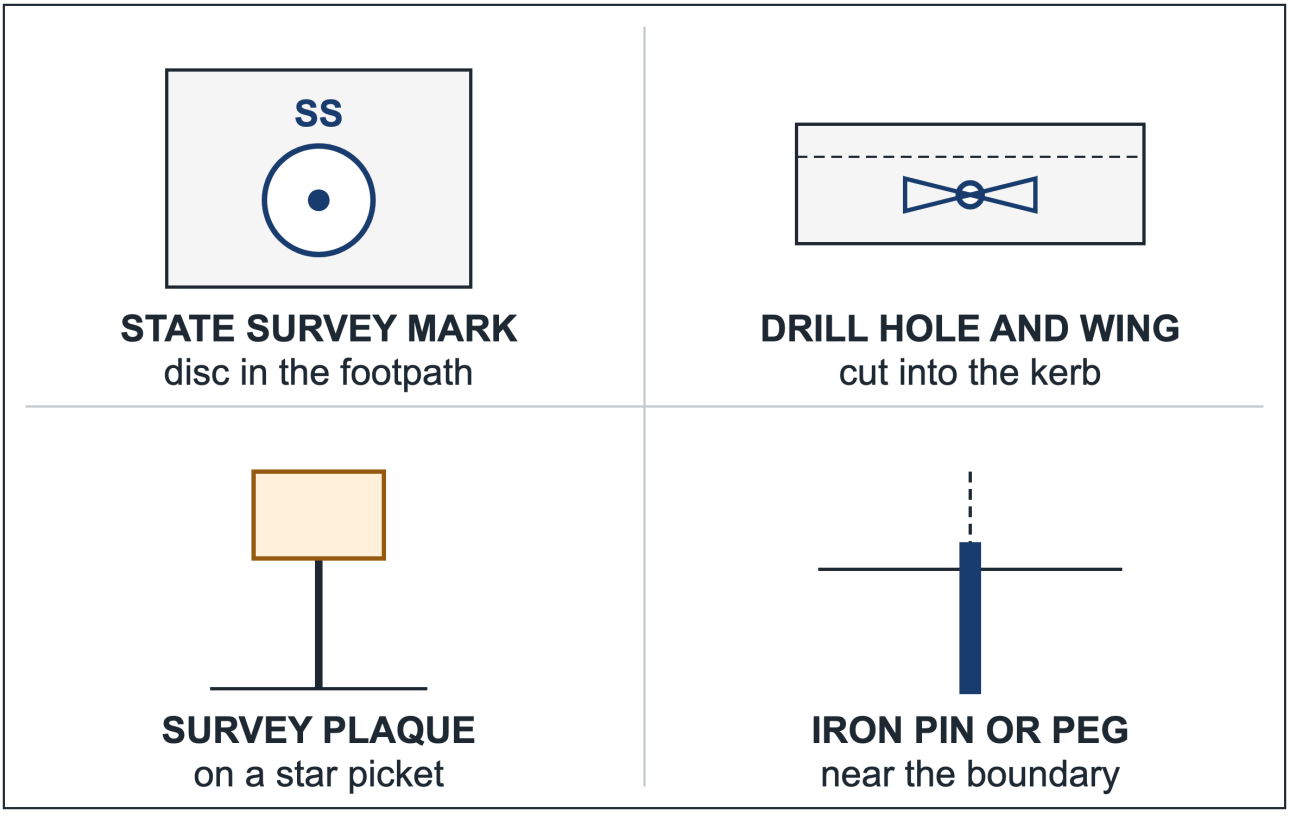
Spatial Services, part of the NSW Government, says there are generally two types of survey marks: permanent survey marks (PSMs) and cadastral reference marks (Spatial Services, POSI).

Permanent survey marks define position and height for surveying, mapping and engineering work. Spatial Services says PSMs "are often found in roads, footpaths, kerb and gutters, or any natural ground surface". Each one in the state's database has a two-letter type and a number, such as SS for a State Survey Mark or PM for a Permanent Mark (Using SCIMS Online).

Cadastral reference marks provide reference points for property boundaries and also define them. They are more common than PSMs and come in several forms, including drill holes and wing chiselled into concrete such as kerb and guttering, pins or stones at a road

intersection or in the kerb, and concrete blocks, iron rods or galvanised pipes buried near a property boundary (Spatial Services, POSI).

Surveyors often show where a mark is with a star picket, an identification plate or spray paint on something nearby (Spatial Services, POSI). A survey plaque on a post tells you a permanent survey mark is close, helps a surveyor find it, and warns that there is a penalty for destroying it (Surveyor-General's Direction No. 1).



Four kinds of survey mark an owner may see near the street.

The codes you may see on a record or a disc:

- **SS**: State Survey Mark
- **PM**: Permanent Mark
- **TS**: Trigonometrical Station
- **CR**: Cadastral Reference Mark
- **GB**: Geodetic Bench Mark
- **MM**: Miscellaneous Survey Mark
- **CP**: Mapping Control Point

How to look up a survey mark on SCIMS

SCIMS is the Survey Control Information Management System, the state's database of permanent survey marks. The NSW Government describes SCIMS Online as "a free, web-based mapping tool that lets anyone access SCIMS data through the Spatial Collaboration Portal". Each user needs their own portal account, which is free to register (SCIMS Online).

You can search by address, Lot/DP number, suburb, local government area, road intersection or mark number, see each mark on a map, and download its coordinates, height, details and locality sketch plan. Heights are recorded against the Australian Height Datum (AHD), and any coordinate or height for a permanent survey mark quoted on a survey plan must come from SCIMS Online (SCIMS Online).

Each record also carries a status. The four an owner is most likely to see are below; the others mark restricted areas and areas subject to ground movement (Using SCIMS Online):

- **Found**: undamaged and in its original position.
- **Not found**: not found after an extensive search, with no physical evidence it was removed.
- **Uncertain**: found, but unstable or showing signs it was disturbed or moved.
- **Destroyed**: physical evidence it was removed or moved from its original position.

Cadastral reference marks are recorded in SCIMS without a locality sketch plan. To find those, the deposited plan for your area is needed (Using SCIMS Online). Spatial Services recommends a registered land surveyor, or someone under their supervision, for this plan search before works (Spatial Services, POSI).

What NSW law says about disturbing a survey mark

The rule is in section 24 of the Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002 (NSW) (legislation.nsw.gov.au, Act 2002 No 83): "A person must not remove, damage, destroy, displace, obliterate or deface any survey mark unless authorised to do so by the Surveyor-General."

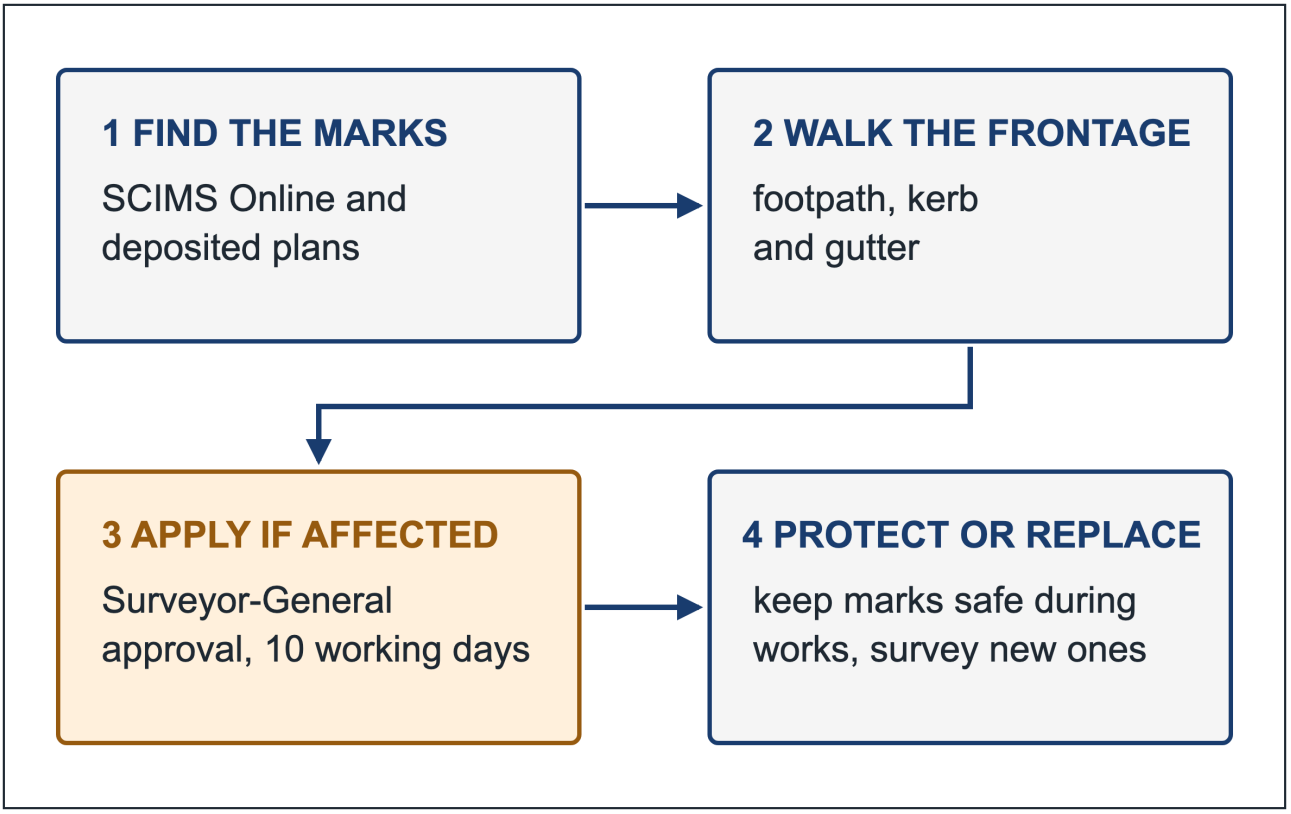
- **Penalty:** a maximum of 25 penalty units. Spatial Services puts a penalty unit at $110, which makes the maximum $2,750 at today's rate (Spatial Services, POSI).
- **Reinstatement:** a court that finds a person guilty can also order compensation of up to $10,000 to the Surveyor-General towards the cost of reinstating the mark.
- **Loss to others:** it can also order up to $10,000 in compensation to any other person for loss or damage caused by the offence.

The section covers any survey mark, not only the state marks in the street. Spatial Services also says the unauthorised destruction of survey marks costs NSW "millions of dollars per year", mostly borne by landowners, government, developers and the community, and that it audits and investigates unauthorised destruction.

Protect it before works or deal with it after: what changes

Step	Protect it before works	Deal with it after damage
Finding the marks	Check the permanent survey mark layer, download locality sketches, search deposited plans for reference marks and inspect the footpath, kerb and gutter (Spatial Services)	The mark is already gone or moved; its status should be reported with a Survey Mark Status Report
Approval	Apply for Surveyor-General approval through the Spatial Services Customer Hub at least 14 days before the mark is disturbed; allow 10 working days for a response	The removal was not authorised, so the section 24 offence may apply
Survey work	Follow the approval conditions, place new marks and arrange a survey where required; up to 3 weeks for the survey	A court can order up to $10,000 towards reinstating the mark
Legal exposure	Works go ahead with the Surveyor-General's authority	Up to 25 penalty units, plus up to $10,000 to anyone else who suffered loss
Cost and time	Spatial Services says planning for marks minimises the risk of project delays and breaches of the Act	Delays and breaches, which Spatial Services says can significantly increase project costs

Sources for the table: Spatial Services, POSI, Surveyor-General's Direction No. 11 and section 24 of the Act.



The order of steps before works near a survey mark.

Surveyor-General's Direction No. 11 sorts removal applications by size. A job confined to a small area, nominally a single road intersection or a frontage of no more than four lots, is small scale. Where small-scale works run on from each other, such as kerb and gutter or footpath upgrades, the large-scale procedures apply instead. A small-scale application includes a survey mark audit schedule and a clear description of the extent of work, such as a sketch. Spatial Services can change the category when it assesses the application (Surveyor-General's Direction No. 11).

Street survey marks and the pegs on your boundary

Surveyors use survey marks to establish the accurate location of property boundaries, and that information is recorded on the deposited plan that defines your lot (Spatial Services, POSI).

- **Permanent survey marks** in the footpath or kerb give a position and height in the state network. They are what a surveyor ties into when a job needs coordinates or AHD levels, such as a detail survey for a design.
- **Reference marks** in the kerb or near the boundary record where the boundary was measured from. When one is lost, the next survey of that boundary has more work to do.
- **Boundary marks** at your corners, such as pegs, show where the boundary was marked on the ground. Direction No. 11 requires any boundary mark or reference mark affected by works to be surveyed by, or under the supervision of, a registered land surveyor. If you are not sure what a peg on your land is, leave it in place and ask a registered land surveyor.

Both matter when a new fence goes in. A dividing fence usually runs along the common boundary, and the marks are how that line is found again on the ground. Our guide to the Dividing Fences Act NSW covers the fence process itself, and boundary marking is the survey that puts the line back in place.

Before driveway, fence or retaining wall works: what to do and who to tell

Spatial Services says all development and construction work that may affect survey marks must consider them at the planning stage. For a house frontage in Wollongong, that comes down to a short list:

1. **Look up the marks.** Register a free Spatial Collaboration Portal account, search your address on SCIMS Online and note any permanent survey marks near the frontage. Reference marks come from the deposited plans, which a registered land surveyor can search.
2. **Walk the frontage.** Look at the footpath, kerb and gutter for discs, drill holes, pins, plaques, star pickets or spray paint.
3. **Get Council approval for the road reserve.** Wollongong City Council says you need its approval before any work on public roads, footpaths or the land between the road and your property, under section 138 of the Roads Act (Wollongong City Council

(wollongong.nsw.gov.au)). That approval is Council's; survey marks are a separate approval from the Surveyor-General.

4. **Apply before work if a mark could be affected.** The application for Surveyor-General approval goes through the Spatial Services Customer Hub, at least 14 days before the mark would be disturbed. If only permanent survey marks are affected, it needs a declaration from a registered land surveyor that no reference marks are affected. Spatial Services says to allow 10 working days for a response.
5. **Protect the marks you keep.** Comply with the approval conditions and protect nearby marks from disturbance for the whole job. Tell your builder, concreter or excavator where they are.
6. **Replace and survey where required.** Where the approval asks for new marks, allow up to 3 weeks for that survey, depending on the job.

If a mark is already damaged or you cannot find one shown on SCIMS, Spatial Services asks for a Survey Mark Status Report, through its Customer Hub or the NSW Survey Marks app (Using SCIMS Online).

Planning a driveway, fence or wall near a survey mark?

Tell us the address and what you are planning, and we will say which survey you need. Free, no-obligation quotes across Wollongong and the Illawarra.

GET A FREE QUOTE

CALL (02) 4210 5831

When a strip on your title also runs along the boundary, our guide to easements in NSW covers what you can build on or near it.

Frequently asked questions

What is a survey mark in NSW?

A fixed point a surveyor uses to measure position, height or a property boundary. Spatial Services groups them into permanent survey marks, which carry a position and height in the state network, and cadastral reference marks, which reference and define property boundaries (Spatial Services).

Can I remove a survey mark near my property?

Not without authority. Section 24 of the Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002 says no one may remove, damage, destroy, displace, obliterate or deface any survey mark without the Surveyor-General's authority. If works need a mark moved, apply for approval first (Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002; Spatial Services). If you are not sure what a peg on your land is, a registered land surveyor can tell you.

What is the penalty for damaging a survey mark in NSW?

A maximum of 25 penalty units. Spatial Services gives the current value as $110 a unit, which makes $2,750. A court can also order up to $10,000 towards reinstating the mark and up to $10,000 to anyone else who suffered loss (Spatial Services; Surveying and Spatial Information Act 2002).

How do I find survey marks near my property?

Register a free Spatial Collaboration Portal account, search your address, Lot/DP or suburb on SCIMS Online, and download the locality sketch for any permanent survey mark. Reference marks are found from the deposited plans. Then walk the footpath, kerb and gutter (Spatial Services).

What should I do if a survey mark is damaged?

Report it with a Survey Mark Status Report through the Spatial Services Customer Hub or the NSW Survey Marks app, so the record shows its real status. If your own planned works will affect a mark, that is a removal application instead, made before work starts (Spatial Services).

Get a free quote for your block

Works coming up near the kerb or the boundary?

Free, no-obligation quotes for boundary marking and detail surveys across Wollongong and the Illawarra.

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