

Automated Land Registration: Fifteen Years on - Reflections on the New Zealand Experience

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Automated registration has been a feature of our Torrens system since 2003 and is now an accepted part of conveyancing and property law in New Zealand.

In line with technology developments in other areas of law and commerce, computerisation and the digital revolution have transformed the practice of conveyancing and land registration over the last few decades. In New Zealand, the paper-based arrangements relied upon up until the late 1990s have been replaced by an online system which allows lawyers and conveyancers to instantly search title information and digitally submit transfers and other property transactions for registration.

The *Landonline* system operated by Land Information New Zealand is a highly automated service capable of delivering real time registration for around 87% of the 600,000 or so property transactions received online each year. Much of the work previously undertaken by land registry officials is now completed without manual intervention in terms of computer-based system controls and business rules set by the Office of the Registrar-General of Land. These arrangements are designed to ensure property transactions are properly authorised and legally compliant.

These changes have vastly improved the accessibility of property information and resulted in a much quicker, more efficient process for securing guaranteed title by registration. Property transactions which might have taken days or even weeks to register in the paper environment can now be registered instantaneously almost immediately following settlement. By international standards we are doing well. *Landonline* is regarded as a very advanced system and our arrangements for property registration are consistently ranked highly in comparative benchmarking undertaken by the World Bank as part of its annual *Doing Business* report.

This presentation explores how the New Zealand land transfer system has performed over the last fifteen years of automated registration, considers the implications for property lawyers and conveyancers, and canvasses some of the opportunities and challenges facing the land registry given our ever-changing digital operating environment.