Dear Mr Robert Wright

*Australian Book Review*, established in 1961, is a literary/cultural magazine that publishes 10 print issues a year. We are a not-for-profit organisation dependent on income from magazine subscription sales, as well as from advertisers, government, philanthropic trusts and private donations. We conduct our business in a small and highly competitive market.

Price increases and delivery standard changes since 2014 have made it a challenging environment for our business, since the core activity of our organisation is to sell and distribute the magazine to readers around Australia. (We also have a digital edition, but the print edition remains our major earner – and without it the business would not survive. In this we are comparable to most cultural magazines around the world.)

Until recently we always used Print Post to send our magazine (Presort Large Letter category), to minimise the high cost of postage. This entailed a nominal delay of two days in delivery. Because of worsening rates of delivery – especially outside Victoria – we have opted to change the delivery to the more expensive Regular mail. Despite this, feedback from many of our subscribers (keen to receive their magazine on the first of the month) indicates that some deliveries are considerably slower than the standard delivery times – or not delivered at all. We have received magazines with valid postal addresses that were marked ‘Return to Sender’; no satisfactory reason has been provided, despite enquiries.

It is now quite common for people living in Sydney or Adelaide to wait a week or longer for a magazine sent from Melbourne by ordinary mail. Some but not all subscribers realise that a changed situation at Australia Post is to blame. There is a risk that *Australian Book Review* and like magazines will be punished for delays and inefficiencies beyond their control. This magazine prides itself on always going to press on schedule and to maintaining the highest professional standards. Now we face a new culture of delays and laxity beyond our control.

As Australia Post increase prices to subsidise their losses, we hope that the ACCC will evaluate how such pricing models may impact small organisations like ours – those that do not have a viable alternative for our large letter deliveries. We cannot use a courier service, and we cannot radically change our core business product to fit the Australia Post letters system for concession pricing. As the prices increase, to our alarm, we do not see any improvement in the delivery service standards, but rather, marked deterioration – the result of a much more laissez-faire attitude towards delivery.

Passing on the additional postal costs will only increase the commercial difficulties facing small magazines of this kind to provide our product at a reasonable price to the average reader who values the literary and cultural input of our magazine, which Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee has rated as ‘the most trustworthy guide to new books in Australia’.

We would welcome more consultation and consideration of the negative impacts of Australia Post’s pricing increase for us, our fellow magazines, and our clientele – the reading community of Australia.

Sincerely yours

Peter Rose

Peter Rose

Editor
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