

Dear ACCC

OBJECTION TO INCREASE IN PRICE OF ORDINARY LETTERS TO 50 CENTS

(Please note this is a very quick response, but given the nature of the world, if I don't do this immediately, it may not be done at all)

1. I wish to lodge a strong objection to the increase in the price of ordinary letters to 50 cents. The grounds of the objection are both value-based as well as economic, though the former may well not sit well with the ACCC's charter. Nevertheless, the value-based objection is of particular importance.

2. Briefly, my objections are:

- a) cost: this will further destroy the art of letter-writing, as letters already cost almost double the cost of a phone call, and will add to the burden of writing;
- b) other cost: it will add to the cost of sending off cheques to pay bills, or to ask for information for the consumer, and in turn, may cost small business more to respond. It also adds to the individual cost of responding to tax matters, eg. now I have to send off my tax file number, and the cost becomes quite large, relatively speaking;
- c) social issue: we need a literate society. However, everything is encouraging people to use short-hand (as I am doing, to a certain extent, by emailing) and in so doing, less care is taken with written english. We should be encouraging people to write letters, to keep up the social fabric and maintain social contacts, and one most enjoyable way to do this is through letter writing. For example, I recently sent a sympathy note by email to a close friend, but she has asked me to write also, as she will be putting all condolences in a book. This is not something that can be fitted into a commercial card, with its 5 words or whatever the requirement is. I will be writing to her. And this one example is multiplied many times in society. Moreover, for those living in the country, letter-writing may be a diminishing way of keeping in contact when the price increases. As a former boarder in the city, to country parents, I grew up, and depended on, the weekly letter. In turn, with my daughter overseas, I write a weekly letter, and ditto to a son in Melbourne. However, those of us with old fashioned virtues/approaches to life are being penalised by being asked to pay more and more to keep up such social contacts.
- d) bias to large business, and increased attack on the individual: while continuing to 'value' everything in business terms, the ACCC and Australia

Post are wiping out the individual in every day life, just as the banks are seeking to wipe out individual small customers by making it increasingly difficult to get service at banks, and imposing very high costs on those with few funds. This is a backward step for society. ACCC, the Government, Australia Post, private business, should continue to support the social fabric, and should not cost everything for the individual and base these costs in the same way that business costs are estimated. It is applying inappropriate principles to the development of cost structures.

3. If you continue just to consider economic arguments, you destroy our social fabric and underlying values. We should be encouraging increased contact between far-flung members of society. Sure, people can use the email, and telephone. But it is nice to have a letter to hold, to bring out again, to re-read, to pass on to the next generation. This is value-based. And if you want to put a cost on this, put a very high value cost on it. If anything the ACCC should be allowing hand written letters, or letters addressed by hand (as opposed to bulk business mail), to be charged at say 25 cents per letter. If you did this for a year, you could see whether business increased, for Australia Post, and perhaps you could ask sociologists to interview those in the bush, those confined to home, those with boarders, those bereaved, about any increase in letters received.

for your consideration.
yours sincerely
Peta Colebatch