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### **SUBMISSION ON AUSTRALIA POST PRICE INCREASES**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the inquiry into proposed Australia Post price increases. We note the opportunity to "comment on other relevant matters is also welcomed".

The last price increase was fixed for 5 years and consumers could be confident of a fair spell before the issue of further price increases would be raised. The same is also required for this proposed increase and we request that a definite time be announced, as many consumers using Australia Post for personal mail would be inconvenienced by changes occurring too frequently.

CAWA understands that with the introduction of email, mobile phones, internet etc. and with the gradual passing of an older generation, personal mail has declined over the past 5 years and is now down to 5 % of volume with further downwards movement likely with these new forms of contact becoming more widely used. Personal consumers however are increasingly shopping online and a 10% increase in postal rates for larger items would have a substantial negative impact on the overall cost of online purchases.

The continued lower price for seasonal greetings is appreciated.

It is not clear whether postcards are included in the new pricing schedule and whether they are classed as ordinary and therefore 50c, soon to be 55c postage? Consumers on holidays are not always aware of the need to use international stamps for overseas posting of postcards.

Point of sale information is sadly lacking in many instances and confusion occurs where the standard postal rate varies with the size or weight of mail.

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The right of consumers to a personal/social mail is still paramount and for the protection "of the Crown", as it was, guaranteed delivery should be adhered to with particular respect to Community Service Obligations.

We note the obvious choice of a 5c increase because a smaller amount is not possible without "rounding up" however we wonder whether 5c pieces will also be phased out as have 1c and 2c.

Consumers, including the very young, elderly, disadvantaged, disabled, rural and isolated consumers, have many uses for personal mail that will never change despite modern technology and this must be respected. Many of these cannot be adequately depicted in studies such as that performed by Meyrick and Associates.

Consumers are targets for much unsolicited promotional mail which is quickly discarded, giving the idea that it was a complete waste of time for all concerned. If increased postage rates discourage this practice, consumers will be doubly advantaged through decreased junk mail and through the cross subsidisation of personal mail services.

With many complaints about Australia Post brought to our attention over the years, we would like to attach a list that hopefully Australia Post will try and take on board and attend to. We suggest that Australia Post should appoint a Consumer Representative as a go between in postal matters impacting on general consumers. To be told that a postal complaint "was not worth" even a phone call to explain to the customer what had occurred is just not good enough. The complaints system is not customer friendly at all. The complaint form itself is particularly consumer unfriendly and discourages consumers to complain. Improvements in this area alone would improve feedback with regard to the many difficulties consumers experience in dealing with Australia Post.

Some Post Offices are considerably better stocked, equipped and accessible than others. All consumers should have access to an efficient and well organised postal system.

Yours faithfully

Genette Keating  
President.

Submission prepared by  
Rhonda Algaba  
Vice President

Attached: NOTES FOR AUSTRALIA POST ON "OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS"

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## **NOTES FOR AUSTRALIA POST ON "OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS"**

**FROM CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF WA (INC)**

### **1) Mail, or large parcels etc, which do not fit in letter box and are classed as Postal Article Awaiting Collection**

- At present the addressee is left a card, filled in by the postman when he finds that mail cannot be left due to size, bulk or the need for a signature, in the case of registered mail.
- Many times this card is not completed properly, with no notice as to which post office is holding the article to be collected or the contact phone number and may not be stamped by the postman.
- When asking at one's local post office for this mail, a customer may be told that it is not there but at another Post Office a couple of kilometres away, which for an elderly person who has taken a bus can be most daunting and upsetting.
- Why is this mail left at a Post Office that for most is not where customers usually shop or close by at all and does not open on a Saturday?
- When in receipt of one of these cards it can state that the article must be collected within 5 days, causing difficulties for consumers who are working, away or confused as to how weekends and particularly long weekends affect the time limit. Other alternatives should be available and the 5 days extended to at least 7 days to ensure the inclusion of a Saturday.
- Often the person is at home and could have received the mail but a card is left anyway. It states on the card that if someone else is to collect the article, the card must be signed, yet at times it has been known that the Post Office has released mail without checking the signature. Proof of Identity is not always requested which in turn is a concern if the card is in the wrong hands. It can be difficult to get the card signed if the addressee is away from home for an extended period.
- This can be most worrying to the elderly especially if not aware of what the mail contains even though it may only be insignificant or 'junk mail'.
- A customer who was in receipt of one of these cards rang to ask for the mail to be sent to the Post Office she usually used, only to be told no, that she must come and collect it there. This was not possible and she was embarrassed to ask a neighbour to help her out and collect it for her. The lady was at home at the time when the card was left.
- Alternately, valuable articles are often left, unsecured on the front door step until the home owner returns.

### **2) Regarding non-delivery of mail**

- There have been many instances of mail not being delivered and that the Customer Service Complaint Form is too daunting to be filled in by many, especially elderly, visually disabled or non English speaking consumers. It is not in a very customer friendly format at all and the print is pale green on the

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back, where there are the customer notes, which are meant to be read, before signing.

- Mail has been missing often yet not forwarded on from the Dead letter office (if there still is one).
- An article was sent, properly packed and well padded, yet when opened the wooden box inside was found to have been damaged from an obvious fall from height. When reported at the Post Office, the customer was told they should have registered it or insured it. This is not always the answer when it was well padded and customers should be able to have confidence that a high standard of care will be taken with all postal articles. Registration or insurance of every postal article would place a considerable burden on consumers.
- An article of printed mail was posted to the same, correct address on two occasions but on both times it did not arrive. When queried at the Postal Delivery Centre, the customer was asked, "Why didn't you register it?" which is a ridiculous question considering the postage already paid on a simple printed newsletter. It has never arrived at the address and never been returned to the sender.
- Householders have some concerns regarding the damage done to nature strips and lawns by the motor bikes now used by postal officers and there seems to be no way of stopping this.
- Late delivery of re-addressed mail, taking 8 days to come from Perth to Busselton. Yet another instance has come to light of mail taking one week to go from Perth to a Busselton Post Office box that is checked every other day.
- The latest sets of postcards sent to householders with messages regarding the size, state and placing of letterboxes and other safety messages is to be commended but it works both ways if good sense is to prevail.
- Good information should be made more prominent regarding post office preferred envelopes with the warning that some envelopes supplied with greeting cards may incur extra postage or be held up due to size or colour.
- Why do customers have to endure noisy music in the background while waiting in a long, slow queue at the Post Offices these days?
- Increasing occurrences of other people's mail arriving in mail boxes and Post Office boxes suggesting a lack of care in sorting by Post Office staff and also suggesting that a lot of our mail may be arriving in the wrong place with subsequent delays in redirection.

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