

Postal Services Modernisation

Q. 1. The Australia Post services most important to me are:

- Timely delivery of intact letters and parcels
- Service delivery from polite knowledgeable staff – I avoid a service if these are not available

Q.2. What Australia most needs in a modern postal service is:

- Reliability and accuracy and most of all SERVICE. In a rural community, we need a viable service which can return to opening for longer hours. In order to make this possible, access to a greater range of Australia Post services and products (along with the other products and services offered by the proprietor), would assist the agent to maintain a sustainable business.
- Flexibility, a service tailored to community needs rather than 'one size fits all'. Current criteria appear to be applied rigidly to each level of postal service (CPO, LPO, CPA). Our local Post Office was previously classified as a LPO and was utilised by many in the community to pay accounts, purchase Australia Post products etc. Owing to the option taken by a previous manager of the business, without community consultation, to forgo the required training, we now have a CPA with associated reduction of services and in hours of opening. Many residents in this rural area have indicated that they would prefer a return to previous service availability which would no doubt enhance our community. These services are exceptionally important here, where electronic communication is often patchy and public transport consists only of school buses. Flexibility would also benefit those in the community who, due to isolation, economic restrictions, and other reasons, have difficulty accessing some services.
- Information about available products and assistance from staff to select the product best suited to our needs.
- It may be that the government needs to provide some financial support to support Australia Post in rural or remote areas due to distance etc. This might be 'one off' grant to set up an appropriate program or ongoing to support for transport or some other cost.
- Competitive pricing so that customers receive value for service would improve the viability of Australia Post.

Q. 3. Potential benefits – see above.

Q. 4. The ability to send and receive letters is critical in all areas of Australian Society affecting business, social and health relationships Communication services for Australian citizens are essential services and should remain as a high priority for governments. We all pay taxes and should expect essential services to be maintained.

Further increases in postage rates will result in people and businesses seeking an alternate service. Increases in postage rates in recent years appear to have been accompanied by a reduction in service. For example, we subscribe to a rural newspaper which leaves Richmond by priority post each Thursday. It is not uncommon for this paper to arrive on Tuesday the following week and sometimes later. Our post box is 15 minutes outside

Lismore, NSW. Many business letters take several days or a week to arrive from Lismore, or Casino. Years ago these letters would often arrive the day following postage or at the most 2-3 days.

Q. 5. I expect Australia Post's letter services to pretty much disappear in the next 5 years if the service continues to deteriorate at the current rate especially accompanied by an increase in costs to clients. This is not acceptable especially in a country where the population is so broadly distributed.

Q. 6. Considerations when deciding to send a letter are based around costs, especially for larger numbers of letters. Reliability of speed of service is also an issue. Recently we made the decision to hand deliver a business letter to the local council to ensure that it was delivered in a timely fashion. Where possible, we pay accounts in person rather than by post if online account paying is not available. These are examples of additional costs to potential Australia Post customers and more fuel used to travel to locations.

Q. 7. Priority letter service is of no value to us as it is not available at our CPA, and as shown in the example in Q4 above, doesn't improve delivery speed.

Q. 8. If we are to pay more for a service, I would expect an improvement in the efficiency of the service. Comparisons of costs shown in the discussion paper are only from European countries which have very different population distribution from Australia!

Q. 9. The need to access parcel deliveries seems to be increasing as items can often not be obtained from local retailers. I refer to replacement items needed to repair and maintain farm and household equipment. Commonly, appliances need to be returned to the manufacturer for repair, rather than undertaken locally as was previously the case, thus increasing the need for parcel packaging and delivery. I have usually found parcel delivery to be timely.

Q. 10. Access to appropriate packaging is important for oddly shaped or fragile items. Cost is also a consideration.

Q. 11. Speed of delivery and ability to track delivery is very important, however, convenience of collection is critical. We need to access the point of collection both in terms of parking and opening hours.

Q. 12. Environmental factors should include appropriate packaging, e.g. no excess plastics. The mode of transport of letters and parcels should also be considered. Factors such as transporting items to a central point for sorting and then back to the place of origin often increases the 'road miles' when items may be sorted on site at point of postage.

Mail could also be 'piggy backed' onto existing services via road, rail and air, rather than having another vehicle on the road. A simple local example is where the mail was formerly delivered by the school buses or other local regular delivery services and supplemented by a dedicated postal delivery only when these services were not available such as during school holidays.

Q. 13. Our local Post Office is regarded by many as the hub of the community. The building which houses the Post Office is owned, on behalf of the community, by the local hall committee who lease the business to the proprietor.

Residents can contact the Post Office to check local road conditions during times of flood and other adverse events. Community notices adorn the noticeboards. It is a tourist attraction, often photographed, has a geo cache, and features on local souvenirs and in written history of the area. Local residents sadly miss the ability to pay accounts and easily select Australia Post merchandise as previously noted.

Probably the best demonstration of the importance of our local Post Office occurred when the building was destroyed by fire in late September 2012. Within a week the community had raised over \$5000 towards the rebuild. Fundraising over several months, and a grant from Sydney Royal Show Society, along with the building insurance, allowed the business to reopen in new premises, ten months after the fire. The opening was attended by people from all over Australia.

Q. 14. Parcel lockers and payment terminals may be of benefit as this could improve access, however, the building is in an isolated location so that security must be considered.

Q. 15. Assistance with digital communication, including bill payment, would be useful especially where there is limited access to transport and unreliable internet service or residents are not 'computer literate'.

Q. 16. N/A

Q. 17. Australia Post can best support the community by providing:

- Courteous service from knowledgeable staff
- Safety and security for letters and goods in their care
- Reliability of service
- Flexibility in their approach to service provision (as previously stated)
- Improved communication with the Australian public. (I found out about this discussion paper via a call to ABC radio from an interested citizen. I then had to search to find the Discussion paper and have passed on to as many people as I could. This should have been done by Australia Post who is in the business of Communication. We have also have a Post Box but received no correspondence inviting our input.)

Most of these things don't cost any extra and most already exist within Australia Post and would ensure the viability of this essential service.

Betty Olivieri

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]