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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional  
Development, Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Attention: Director,  
Postal Policy—Communications Services and  
Consumer Division

Dear Director

### **POSTAL SERVICES MODERNISATION**

Let me first say that staff at our local [REDACTED] Post Office is very helpful and professional. The local postie at our address is also friendly and considerate.

I am however concerned at the title of the consultation/inquiry. It doesn't mention **improved postal services!** For the cynical amongst Australia Post customers it seems to imply reduced services.

There is no doubt that many people have moved away from sending and receiving physical communications. Many agencies encourage customers to go to e-mail for billing and other communications. This sounds great for the agencies promoting this option (on the front of their envelopes) but in my experience, with the amount of junk that can be in the inbox, it is highly likely that some bills will be missed, resulting in additional fees for late payment. Less likely, in my view, with a physical bill in the mail.

Another very important issue is a service for those people who are not familiar with digital communications like many older people and those that simply do not have the facilities for digital communication. We receive our bills by physical mail because my wife is not familiar with digital communications. Should I become incapacitated and unable to access e-mail bills she would not know until utilities services were shut off or other billers stopped their service.

A physical mail/letter service is still an important service for many Australians and Australia Post should be doing its utmost to make the service convenient, timely and efficient. I would like to record some of my observations about the postal service below.

- The time taken for delivery of some letters is beyond belief. It does not get the name 'snail mail' for nothing. We regularly get letters from Centrelink giving us 28 days from the letter date to provide a reply. In some cases the letter arrives up to 14 days after the date on the letter. Perhaps Centrelink leaves the letter lying around for bulk processing or it gets lost in the system? We can't tell because there is usually no post mark to check.

Last year I received a letter from a dear friend's wife to say that my friend was in hospital and would welcome a visit. The letter took over a week to come from Sydney to [REDACTED]. When I contacted my friend's wife she told me that my friend had died several days beforehand. A disappointing outcome!

Letters to our grandchildren in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] seem to take over a week to be delivered but parcels turn up in a few days.

The time from posting to delivery is an important issue for customers of Australia Post. Delivery 3 days per week would probably not make a big difference to overall time but slowness in the pick up, processing and transport to delivery centres would have a big impact. I've noticed the post box emptying times (on the box) have changed at [REDACTED] Post Office over several years from 6:00 pm to 5:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

- Another aspect affecting convenience is the loss and location of street post boxes. I've noticed that these have gradually disappeared from some locations. One that is still in position is on the side of the road at [REDACTED] NSW. However, the location is hardly convenient for customers - no footpath, difficulty parking – not user friendly! There are shops, footpaths and parking nearby that could have provided a better location.

Perhaps the location of boxes and convenience for users should be considered in the improvement of services. Australia Post might also consider recycling the historic letter boxes in cities and towns across NSW. Better to be used rather than stand as a static monument!

- For several years I retained a Post Office Box in [REDACTED] for my business. This worked quite well but the fee for the box kept increasing substantially each year. I don't understand the imposition of such high fees when the delivery of letters to the box does not require delivery to a street address and saves a considerable amount for Australia Post. A review of the pricing of post boxes must be part of the inquiry into improved postal services.
- I find it intriguing that Australia Post has not promoted the benefits of physical letters.
  - They are not affected by hacking. My e-mail address was compromised in the Medibank hack and I now get unwanted junk mail. There not many hackers that want the additional work of posting a letter!
  - How many people have cheated out of their life savings in online scams that would not have occurred with a letter enclosing a bank cheque to the vendor of a property?
- In relation to Post Offices, I believe they can provide more services on behalf of Government. Perhaps some aspects of Centrelink, Medicare or other services could be handled. Particularly in remote areas where there could be a Post Office but no other Government entity.

To sum up, Australia Post should improving the traditional postal service as well as modernising.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]