

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Australia Post

Question No: 176

Hansard Ref: ECA 4/5

Topic:

Mail deliveries in Flood Affected Areas (QLD)

Senator Macdonald asked:

Could you table a list of areas affected by floods, specifically in the Croydon and Georgetown areas.

Answer:

The following areas were affected by the recent floods in far-North Queensland:

Aramac, Burketown, Cairns, Clermont, Cloncurry, Croydon, Dalrymple Heights, Doomadgee, Einasleigh, Finch Hatton, Forsayth, Gargett, Georgetown, Ilframcombe, Isisford, Julia Creek, Jundah, Karumba, Kowanyama, Longreach, Mt Isa, Muttaborra, Normanton and Winton.

As regards Croydon and Georgetown in particular, the first major road closures occurred on Monday 26 January 2009, when the main road to these areas was washed away by the floods. Permanent road closures were introduced on Thursday 29 January, affecting the delivery of mail to both Croydon and Georgetown. In conjunction with Queensland Emergency Services, Australia Post was able to uplift mail (including parcels) across the Einasleigh River on Wednesday 4 and 11 February to these communities. The mail was then provided to postal agents to deliver. Weekly uplift of Express Post, standard and large letters continued to both Croydon and Georgetown via a local provider, West Wing Aviation. The main road was reopened to traffic on Tuesday 17 February with mail subsequently being despatched via Cairns in line with normal arrangements and no further delays occurred.

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Question No: 177

Hansard Ref: ECA 8/9

Topic:

Expenditure on Beijing Olympics

Senator Abetz asked:

Could you provide details of expenses associated with the Beijing Olympics in the following categories: sponsorship; hospitality; travel; accommodation and other relevant categories?

Answer:

The breakdown of Australia Post's expenditure on the Beijing Olympic Games was as follows:

Activity	\$m
Sponsorship of the Australia Olympic Team through the Australian Olympic Committee.	\$1.15
Advertising and promotions for Express Courier International competition, Letter Link school program and Gold Medal stamps.	\$0.38
Hospitality Packages – including event tickets, accommodation, meals, road transport and airport transfers.	\$0.95
Airfares	\$0.25
TOTAL	\$2.73

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Question No: 178

Hansard Ref: ECA 9

Topic:

Licensed Post Offices (LPOs) – Specified Rate Post Office Boxes

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Do the two LPOs categorised as specified post offices still exist?
2. If so, are they still provided with that categorisation?
3. If the categorisation is still in place, is Australia Post amending the categorisation for these two LPOs?

Answer:

- 1-3. The two LPOs in question - Burwood North and McMahons Point – were changed from “Specified Rate” to “Standard Rate” with effect from 28 January 2009.

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Question No: 179

Hansard Ref: ECA 9

Topic:

LPOs closed and Corporate Post Offices closed/converted in 2008

Senator Abetz asked:

For the calendar year 2008, could you provide details of

- (a) how many LPOs closed?
- (b) how many corporate post offices closed?
- (c) how many corporate post offices were converted to LPOs?

Answer:

- (a) Six LPOs closed during 2008:
 - Pakenham Upper (VIC)
 - Mildura East (VIC)
 - Dungowan (NSW)
 - Lucinda (QLD)
 - Rottnest Island (WA)
 - Glenelg Jetty Road (SA)
- (b) None
- (c) Two corporate post offices were converted to LPOs in 2008:
 - Northbridge (NSW)
 - Willunga (SA)

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Question No: 180

Hansard Ref: ECA 10

Topic:

Delivery Points – Private and Business

Senator Abetz asked:

1. Can you confirm that some delivery points are categorised as business for the purpose of redirecting mail and that the same delivery point is sometimes categorised as private for the purpose of paying licensees?
2. If this is correct, what is the rationale behind this?

Answer:

1. Under the LPO Agreement, farms are treated as private delivery points unless there is an associated business operating from this address. Similarly, customers redirecting mail from a farm are charged the fee for a private delivery point unless there is an associated business.
2. The rationale for this is that the volume of mail for a farm with no associated business is the same as any other private delivery point.

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Question No: 181

Hansard Ref: ECA 11

Topic:

Post Office Agents Association Ltd (POAAL) – Delivery Contractors

Senator Abetz asked:

Can you explain why POAAL is not considered the representative body for mail contractors?

Answer:

Australia Post has a contractual relationship with each contractor who may nominate a representative. All contractual issues are dealt with between this nominated representative and Australia Post.

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Question No: 182

Hansard Ref: ECA 12

Topic:

Dog Attacks – Delivery Contractors

Senator Abetz asked:

Can you confirm that all reports of dog attacks are followed up by Australia Post?

Answer:

To Australia Post's knowledge, all instances of dog attacks on mail contractors have been appropriately followed up.

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Question No: 183

Hansard Ref: ECA 14

Topic:

Murrumbateman – Situation of Letterboxes

Senator Nash asked:

Is there a standard procedure for locating letter boxes in consultation with contractors. How was this implemented in Murrumbateman?

Answer:

There is a standard process for the introduction of a new roadside mail delivery service in rural areas. This includes direct discussions with householders about the preferred location for letterboxes. In areas where a large number of delivery points may be involved (i.e. too many to visit personally), markers are used to indicate the preferred location for letterboxes.

At Murrumbateman, a small red painted marker was placed on the resident's property to indicate the best location for delivery of their mail. Residents were then invited to contact Australia Post if the proposed location was not satisfactory. In addition to this, individual discussions were held with a number of residents in the actual village of Murrumbateman.

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Question No: 184

Hansard Ref: ECA 14

Topic:

Murrumbateman LPO – Discussions with Prospective Licensees

Senator Nash asked:

What discussions took place with individuals that expressed an interest in running the Murrumbateman LPO and the reasons why those discussions did not reach a successful conclusion?

Answer:

The LPO licensee at Murrumbateman gave 90 days notice to Australia Post that they intended to terminate the LPO Agreement initially with effect from January 2009. Subsequent negotiations extended this to February 2009. During this period of notice, Australia Post formally invited expressions of interest to operate the LPO.

Some 12 people expressed a genuine interest in operating the LPO. Of these, 11 incorrectly assumed they would have access to the former LPO premises and withdrew from the process when they learnt this was not the case. One person nominated alternative premises, which Australia Post considered unsuitable. This person subsequently withdrew from the process for personal financial reasons.

Australia Post has recently reached agreement with a local business person to provide postal services in Murrumbateman. The outlet will operate out of the Rural Supplies Store from 1 April 2009.

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Question No: 185

Hansard Ref: ECA 14

Topic: Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) – Disputes Heard in 2007-08

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you provide details of how many matters involving Australia Post employees in the last financial year were:

- (a) listed before the AIRC; and
- (b) show how they compared to the previous financial year.

Answer:

- (a) 66 in 2007/08; and
- (b) 32 in 2006/07.

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Question No: 186

Hansard Ref: ECA 14

Topic: AIRC – Legal Representation Costs

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you please provide legal representation costs for industrial disputes before the AIRC in:

- (a) 2005/06
- (b) 2006/07
- (c) 2007/08

Answer:

- (a) \$57,427
- (b) \$187,430
- (c) \$482,053

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Question No: 187

Hansard Ref: ECA 15/17

Topic:

Future Delivery Design (FDD) Program

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you please provide details in relation to the FDD Program:

- (a) the starting date;
- (b) how many people were involved in its development and implementation;
- (c) total amount budgeted for the program;
- (d) total expenditure invested in implementing the program; and
- (e) the period of time this investment will be carried out.

Answer:

- (a) Development of the FDD Program commenced in November 2006 with the appointment of the FDD Program Director and project resources.
- (b) 36 people have been involved in the development and implementation of the FDD Program.
- (c-e) Budget and expenditure details* for the FDD Program are as follows:

	2006/2007 (actual)	2007/2008 (actual)	2008/2009 (estimate)	2009/2010 (estimate)	2010/2011
Capital Investment Plan	\$223,000	\$8,039,000	\$10,657,000	\$11,205,000	Detailed budget planning yet to be undertaken.
Financial Operating Plan	\$2,330,000	\$3,283,000	\$3,666,000	\$5,806,000	

[*figures rounded to the nearest \$000).

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Question No: 188

Hansard Ref: ECA 17

Topic:

Corporate Responsibility Strategy Stakeholder Survey

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you provide the following details in relation to the Corporate Responsibility Strategy Stakeholder Survey:

- (a) the cost of the survey;
- (b) that a question asked was “How would you feel if Australia Post was privatised”; and
- (c) why ask the question if you know the Government’s current position is against privatising Australia Post?

Answer:

- (a) The total cost of the research project conducted by Allen Consulting Group between February and July 2008 was \$160,433.

- (b) Q4a of the online survey asked:

Australia Post is a corporation owned by the Australian Government. Is public ownership of Australia Post important to you?

- Yes
- No
- Don’t know

- (c) The purpose of Q4a was to establish a baseline for community understanding of Australia Post’s governance structure and determine if the Corporation needed to place more emphasis on this in its external communications.

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Question No: 189

Hansard Ref: ECA 18

Topic:

Mercedes Benz Mail Vans Contract

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you provide the following details on this contract:

- (a) how long had Ford been supplying vehicles to Australia Post;
- (b) on what date were companies invited to tender;
- (c) how were they notified about the tendering process;
- (d) over what period were submitted tenders considered?

Answer:

- (a) Ford supplied mail vans to Australia Post for approximately 25 years.
- (b) Companies were formally invited to tender on 7 July 2006.
- (c) Companies were notified of the tender process via a Letter of Invitation that included a tender documentation pack.
- (d) A phased evaluation and progressive short listing commenced on 11 September 2006 as follows:- initial desktop evaluation, driver evaluation, total cost of ownership analysis, negotiation phase, evaluation of final offers post negotiations, report and recommendation to the Australia Post board. The tender was formally awarded on 1 November 2007.

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Question No: 190

Hansard Ref: ECA 18

Topic:

Mercedes Benz Mail Vans Contract

Senator Hutchins asked:

Could you also provide details on:

- (a) the country in which these vans are built;
- (b) the country in which Ford Transit vans were built; and
- (c) whether Ford has lodged any official complaint about any aspect of the tendering process?

Answer:

- (a) The Mercedes Benz mail vans are manufactured in Germany.
- (b) The Ford mail vans were manufactured in Turkey, with some final assembly taking place in Southampton, England before they were imported into Australia.
- (c) Ford has not lodged any complaint with Australia Post about any aspect of the tendering process. The company was eliminated from the tender process because it was no longer able to offer an automatic transmission version of the mail van. Ford was debriefed accordingly in March 2007.

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Question No: 191

Hansard Ref: ECA 19

Topic: Committee Letter of 7 April 2008 – Availability of Agency Heads to Appear Before Committee

Senator Abetz asked:

Could you please advise:

- (a) whether this letter was received;
- (b) if it was received, why it was not acted upon; and
- (c) will it be acted on in the future?

Answer:

- (a) The Committee's letter of 7 April 2008 was received.
- (b) Generic in nature, it simply indicated, "heads of agencies should be available to attend estimates hearings and answer questions". The Managing Director of Australia Post was available to attend each of the subsequent hearings, but in the absence of any specific request to do so, was not included in the list of witnesses submitted to the Committee.
- (c) As now requested, the Managing Director will attend future hearings, circumstances permitting.

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Question No: 192

Hansard Ref: ECA 20

Topic:

Carbon Emissions Trading Scheme – First Round.

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Could you please clarify why Australia Post believes it is exempt from this scheme?
2. If it were not exempt, could you provide the Committee an estimate of the additional costs that would be involved?

Answer:

1. Australia Post is not required to take part in emissions trading during the first five-year round because it does not exceed the 25,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalence (CO₂-e) or more per year emissions trigger for any one facility.
2. Australia Post has not undertaken any financial modelling at this stage pending further clarification of likely cost impacts.

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Question No: 193

Hansard Ref: ECA 23

Topic:

Staff Dedicated to Managing Mail Contracts.

Senator Bilyk asked:

Could you please provide current information on staff dedicated to managing mail contracts?

Answer:

Details of staff dedicated to managing mail contracts as at February 2009 were as follows:

Location	Full time equivalents February 2009
Headquarters	5
New South Wales	13.5
Victoria	8
Queensland	12.5
South Australia/Northern Territory	5
Western Australia	7
Tasmania	1
TOTAL	52

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Question No: 194

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Finance/Budget/Policy – Efficiency Dividend

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How has Australia Post implemented the one-off two per cent efficiency dividend (ED)?
2. Where have savings been achieved – i.e. which programs/resources have been cut?
3. Has Australia Post had to reduce any activities that it considers to be ‘core businesses or has it had to reduce service standards as a result of the ED?

Answer:

- 1.-3. As an independent Government Business Enterprise (GBE), Australia Post is not subject to the government’s efficiency dividend or similar budget/policy measures.

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Question No: 195

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Efficiency Dividend – Staffing

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts? If so, where and at what level?
2. Are there any plans for staff reductions? If so, please advise details i.e. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.
3. What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? Are such employment programs being reduced? If so, by how many and has Australia Post done an analysis on long term effect on retention and attrition?

Answer:

- 1.-3. As an independent Government Business Enterprise (GBE), Australia Post is not subject to the government's efficiency dividend or similar budget/policy measures.

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Question No: 196

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Consultancy Expenditure

Senator Birmingham asked:

Has Australia Post's consultancy expenditure increased due to reduced staffing?

Answer:

No – Australia Post has not undergone any staffing reductions.

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Question No: 197

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Appropriations

Senator Birmingham asked:

Noting the Government's *Federal Financial Relations Bill 2009*, which appropriates money to Treasury to pass on to the States;

Does Australia Post receive any appropriations that will be transferred to the Treasury Dept?

What are these?

Answer:

As an independent GBE, Australia Post is not in receipt of any Government appropriations.

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Question No: 198

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Data Collection/Analysis

Senator Birmingham asked:

Does Australia Post have enough analytical resources at its disposal? For example, the Government has cut funding to the ABS – is Australia Post provided with enough data collection for evidence-based policy making and evaluation?

Answer:

Yes – as an independent GBE, Australia Post is not dependent on Government funding for its analytical resources.

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Question No: 199

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Depreciation

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Did Australia Post use any depreciation funding for recurrent expenditure in 2007/08?
2. Has Australia Post used any depreciation funding for recurrent expenditure this year?
3. Has any depreciation funding been used for purposes other than the replacement of capital items in 2007/08?
4. How much has Australia Post spent on replacement of capital items in the first six months of 2008/09?

Answer:

- 1-3. No – as an independent GBE, Australia Post is subject to Australian International Financial Reporting Standards (A-IFRS), which preclude the use of depreciation funding for recurrent or any other non-capital expenditure.
4. For the first six months of 2008/09, Australia Post's capital expenditure was \$148.5m.

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Question No: 200

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Stimulus Package

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. Does Australia Post have any involvement in measures announced as part of the \$42 billion budget stimulus package?
2. If so, was (and when was) Australia Post asked for input before the stimulus package was announced?
3. When did Australia Post know details about the stimulus package affecting its portfolio?

Answer:

- 1-3. Australia Post has not had any involvement in - and is not directly affected by – the government's budget stimulus package.

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Question No: 201

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: Staffing

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What is the current total staffing for Australia Post – permanent and temporary?
2. What was the total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing level for Australia Post on 1 July 2008?
3. How many permanent staff were recruited in calendar year (CY) 2008 and in financial year (FY) 2008/09 to date? What level are these staff?
4. How many temporary positions exist or have been created in CY 2008 and in FY 2008/09 to date?
5. For CY 2008 and FY 2008/09 to date, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

Answer:

1. At 28 February 2009, there were 34,023 permanent employees and 1,111 temporary or fixed term employees.
2. Total FTE staffing on 1 July 2008 was 31,292.
3. 4,442 staff were recruited in CY 2008 and 2,087 in FY 2008/09 (to end of February 2009) at the following levels:

CY 2008			
Designation	Number	Designation	Number
Administrative Officer – A1	4	Administrative Officer – A5	21
Administrative Officer – A2	17	Administrative Officer – A6	23
Administrative Officer – A3	11	Administrative Officer – A7 (Contract)	9
Administrative Officer – A4	13	Administrative Officer – A8 (Contract)	10

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CY 2008 (cont)			
Designation*	Number	Designation*	Number
Apprentice Postal Technical Officer	11	Postal Delivery Coordinator 2	6
Business Sales and Support Consultant 4	7	Postal Delivery Officer	1179
Customer Care Consultant 3	69	Postal Manager 1	1
Customer Service Consultant 2	121	Postal Services Officer	506
Delivery Manager 2	3	Postal Technical Officer 4	7
Driver/Sorter	33	Postal Transport Officer	174
Engineer 2	1	Resource Planner/Scheduler 7	1
Engineer 3 (Contract)	2	Senior Postal Delivery Officer 2	14
Engineer 4 (Contract)	1	Senior Stores Officer	2
Executive (Contract)	6	Sprintpak Operator 1	4
IT Band 3	16	Sprintpak Operator 2	1
IT Band 4	6	Stores Officer	1
IT Band 5	1	Support Services Officer 1	4
Mail Officer	244	Team Leader Customer Service 5	1
Mail Officer (Teams)	4	Trainee Mail Officer	152
Mail Processing Coordinator 2	1	Trainee Parcel Post Officer	26
Parcel Post Officer	73	Trainee Postal Delivery Officer	1385
Postal Delivery Coordinator 1	1	Trainee Postal Services Officer	270
TOTAL 4442			

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FY 2008/09 (to 28 February)			
Designation	Number	Designation	Number
Administrative Officer – A1	3	Mail Officer	155
Administrative Officer – A2	7	Mail Officer (Teams)	2
Administrative Officer – A3	34	Mail Processing Coordinator 2	1
Administrative Officer – A4	8	Parcel Post Officer	39
Administrative Officer – A5	16	Postal Delivery Coordinator 1	1
Administrative Officer – A6	21	Postal Delivery Coordinator 2	3
Administrative Officer – A7 (Contract)	9	Postal Delivery Officer	695
Administrative Officer – A8 (Contract)	4	Postal Services Officer	286
Apprentice Postal Technical Officer	10	Postal Technical Officer 4	2
Business Sales and Support Consultant 4	3	Postal Transport Officer	107
Customer Care Consultant 3	38	Resource Planner/Scheduler 7	1
Customer Service Consultant 2	117	Senior Postal Delivery Officer 2	13
Delivery Manager 2	2	Senior Stores Officer	1
Driver/Sorter	21	Sprintpak Officer1	3
Engineer 4 (Contract)	1	Stores Officer	1
Executive (Contract)	6	Support Services Officer 1	3
IT Band 3	21	Team Leader Customer Service 5	1
IT Band 4	8	Trainee Mail Officer	85
IT Band 5	3	Trainee Parcel Post Officer	14

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FY 2008/09 (cont)			
Designation	Number	Designation	Number
Trainee Postal Delivery Officer	874	Trainee Postal Services Officer	188
TOTAL 2807			

[If there is no number in the Designation column the position only has one level]

4. As at 28 February 2009, there were 221 temporary (B Class) positions in Australia Post, 108 of which were created in CY 2008 and 102 in FY 2008/09 (to end of February).
5. 96 people were hired on contract in CY 2008, with an average length of employment with Australia Post of 7.9 months. 76 people have been hired on contract in FY 2008/09 (to end of February), with an average length of employment with Australia Post of 4.6 months.

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Question No: 202

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Program Underspending/Lapsing

Senator Birmingham asked:

Which programs are currently tracking for an underspend this financial year?

How many of Australia Post's funding programs/budget measures lapse this Financial Year and what are they?

Answer:

As an independent GBE, Australia Post is not involved in the delivery of budget funded programs.

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Question No: 203

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Gershon Review

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. What impact will the Gershon Review have on Australia Post?
2. How much money will be saved?
3. Will Australia Post be required to return any money to Budget for 2009-10?

Answer:

- 1.-3. As an independent GBE, Australia Post was not involved in nor impacted by the Gershon Review.

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Question No: 204

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic:

Media Monitoring

Senator Birmingham asked:

1. How much was spent on media monitoring in CY 2008?
2. How much has been spent on media monitoring in FY 2008-09 to date?
3. How many staff in Australia Post are employed for media related duties?

Answer:

1. \$125,211.
2. \$76,820.
3. There are 13 employees whose duties include some media work (6 full time equivalents based on time spent on media matters).