

Gail Doyle

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# The future of Australia Post's service delivery

On June 16 2020, the Senate referred to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by **11 August 2020**:

The future of Australia Post's service delivery, with particular reference to:

- a. the Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Amendment Regulations 2020 and their impact on services, the Australia Post workforce and affected businesses;
- b. the impact of COVID-19 on the financial position of Australia Post and its future;
- c. a sustainable plan for Australia Post to provide:
  - i. services that meet community needs and expectations,
  - ii. job security for its workforce, and
  - iii. support for regional and metropolitan licensed post offices:
- d. international and domestic trends with parcels, letters and pricing; and
- e. any related matters.

My name is Gail Doyle and I have been associated with Australia Post since 1985 when I was employed as a corporate retail employee. In 1996 my husband Jim and I purchased the Woonona Licensed Post Office in Wollongong NSW and recently I have become the Licensee and Principal Mail Contractor at Bundanoon Licensed Post Office in the Southern Highlands of NSW.

During these years I have been a witness to many changes at Australia Post from the delivery and retail split in the 1990's to the digital disruption during the 2000's. The recent impact to services at Australia Post during the Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the need to reevaluate a sustainable plan for the future of this industry.

As a stakeholder in both a metropolitan and regional Licensed Post Office and also a delivery contract, it is paramount that Australia Post changes to meet the needs and expectations of the communities that it serves. Gone are the days when we would receive trays of letters to deliver into Post Office boxes. A task that would take around 1.5 hours to complete has declined to a 20 minute sort. I spend the majority of PO Box sorting times now dealing with parcels.

The decline in letters that we receive over the counter and that we sort into our Post Office boxes has decreased dramatically over the years. Once a treasured form of communication the letter is now becoming dated and old fashioned. This trend has been accelerated by the traditional users of Australia Post. Federal, State and Local Governments, banks and utility providers now communicate with their customers primarily in digital form.

No longer do citizens receive correspondence from the Australia Tax Office, Medicare and Centrelink in paper form delivered by mail. Most all communication is now digital and this has had a drastic effect on the amount of letters delivered by Australia Post. We are all guilty of moving to the digital world and experiencing communication like never before. The financial savings that come along with this shift are attractive and the speed at which we all communicate with one another has transformed. The letter has been replaced by so many other digital platforms that it can no longer compete or recover.

Posties are a treasured part of our culture. They are a constant in our lives, riding up and down our streets in a fluorescent flash every day. At what cost though? No longer do I check my mail box at the end of my driveway everyday as most times the postie just rides by with nothing for me or my neighbours. It's a different thing in my house when the parcel van pulls up though.

During 2020 and the Covid-19 crisis I was at the counter of my Post Office and experienced the massive uptake of online trading by both senders and receivers. We have kept our doors open every single day during this crisis to ensure that all Australians were connected. The way in which we use our Post Offices now has changed. Parcels are the main source of our income at Licensed Post Offices and our payments have been decoupled from the letter rate of the day to reflect that change.

Australia Post needs to realign its workforce to remain viable. Posties will continue to deliver but in vans instead of bikes. As a triple stakeholder in Australia Post I need the business to cement its financial position for the future of my businesses and the livelihood of my family and employees. I fully support Australia Post request for regulatory reform. Licensees require a cost effect Australia Post that can meet the changing needs of our communities just as we do every day in our Post Offices.

