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Mr Kai Swoboda
Enquiry Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Swoboda

At the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters held on Monday 1 September 2008 Australia Post took on notice a request from the Committee to provide an analysis of the number of rural and remote offices that accept, consolidate and despatch mailings to another postal processing point within Australia on less than a daily basis.

The results of this analysis are enclosed with specific details of each outlet contained at Appendix 1.

In summary, there are 262 rural or remote offices that receive less than a daily despatch each week. Due to resourcing and time constraints only 57 of these offices are able to append a postmark to mail upon lodgement and before despatch – leaving 205 offices where mail is not postmarked at point of lodgement.

In extreme instances it can take up to eight days for an item that is lodged in the network in one of these rural or remote offices to have a postmark or processing imprint placed on it. Even in situations where there are daily clearances any mail piece lodged in a Street Posting Box after it is cleared on a Friday night will not be postmarked until Sunday at the earliest – which in the context of a Postal vote for a federal election would render the vote invalid.

This highlights why Australia Post supported the previous Committee's recommendation that the voter certification and witness signature rather than the postmark should be used to determine whether a postal vote was cast prior to close of polling.

We would be pleased to discuss the detail and specific contents of the enclosed with the Committee if so desired.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Burke', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Burke

Australia Post

Rural & Remote Mail Acceptance / Despatch

Overview

At the request of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, Australia Post conducted an analysis of the relevant mail paths for rural and remote locations which have a less than daily mail despatch. The purpose was to determine the number and location of offices that do not postmark postal votes in the context of a federal election.

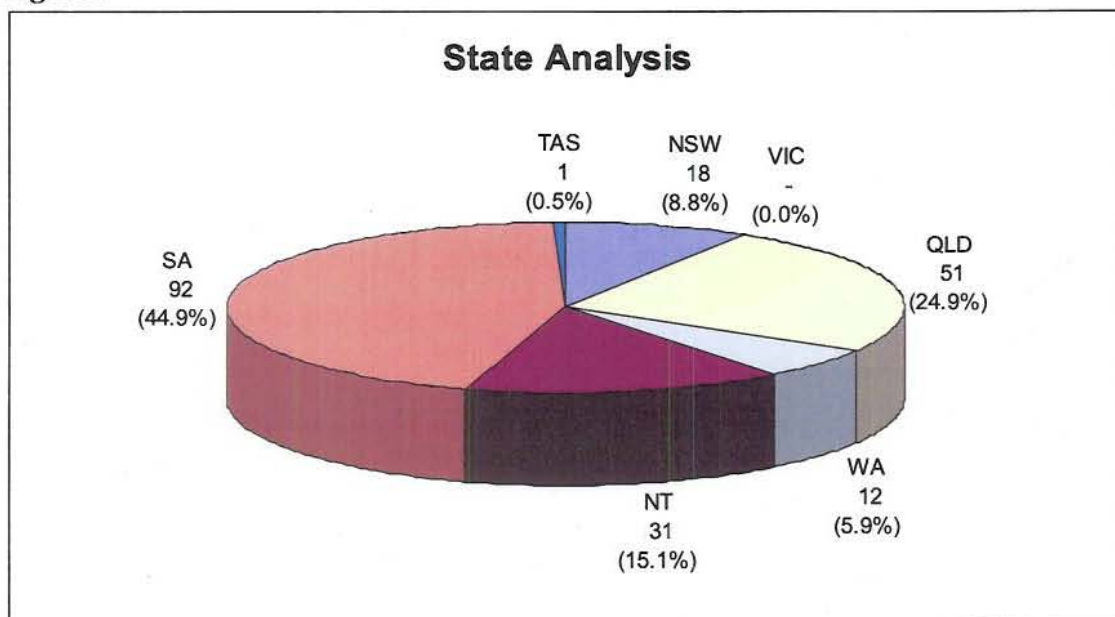
Australia Post has 262 rural / remote offices that have a less than daily mail despatch.

Due to resourcing and time constraints only 57 of these offices are able to append a postmark to mail upon lodgement. Mail at the remaining 205 offices may be subsequently postmarked and or process imprinted at processing facilities within the network after the day of posting.

The 205 offices are detailed in Appendix 1.

In some instances postal vote returns validly lodged by voters at these offices may not be postmarked before polling day and subsequently the vote will be discarded by the AEC.

Figure 1



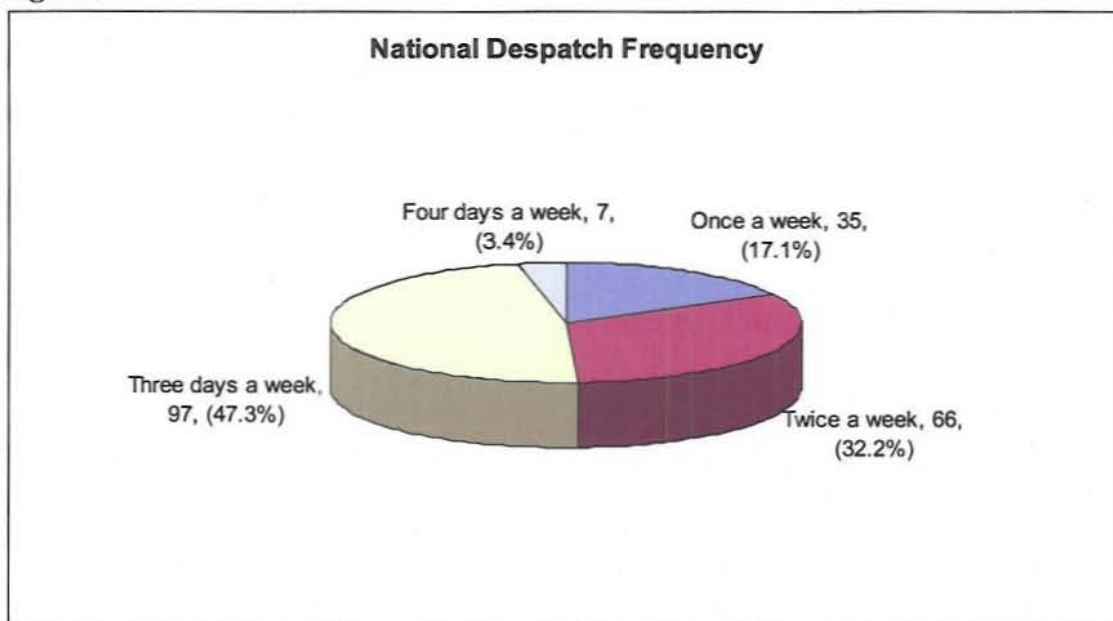
The above graph outlines the state by state breakdown of these offices.

- Queensland has 64 offices that despatch less than daily, 51 of which do not append a postmark.
- South Australia has 92 offices that despatch less than daily with no office postmarking upon lodgement.

- New South Wales has 28 offices that despatch less than daily, 18 of which do not append a postmark.
- Western Australia has 46 offices that despatch less than daily, 12 of which do not append a postmark.
- Northern Territory has 31 offices that despatch less than daily, with no office appending a postmark upon lodgement.
- Tasmania has 1 office that despatches less than daily and it does not append a postmark.

The breakdown of the frequency of despatch from the offices is detailed in figure 2 below.

Figure 2



The majority of offices that have *three* day a week despatches have Monday, Wednesday and Friday despatch times. However, not all despatch times are after close of business hours. A number of despatches on a Friday occur as early as 10am.

The 35 offices that have *one* despatch per week have despatches ranging from Tuesday to Sunday. Thus in an extreme example, a postal vote return correctly lodged on Saturday morning but not despatched until Friday the following week would be postmarked or process imprinted on the following Monday, eight days after polling day.

In addition Australia Post maintains 15,878 Street Post Boxes (SPB) that, depending on location, have a range of daily clearance times, for example 6pm in metropolitan locations and earlier for country locations. Mail lodged within a SPB after the clearance time on Friday but before close of polls on the Saturday will be processed at the earliest on Sunday night. These articles will only receive a processing mark through the stamp cancellation process. Again, valid postal votes may be eliminated.

Conclusion

Due to operational constraints, geographic spread and cost impacts Australia Post cannot guarantee postmarking of all Postal Votes will occur prior to or on the day of the Federal Election.

Appendix 1

State by State List of Offices that postmark after day of posting

South Australia

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
CARRIETON	3
ETADUNNA	1
MULKA	1
MUNGERANNIE STATION	1
KALAMURINA SANCTUARY	1
COWARIE	1
CLIFTON HILLS	1
DULKANINNAPANDIE PANDIE	1
MUNGERANNIE HOTEL	1
SOUTH GAP	1
PERNATTY	1
MAHENWO	1
OAKDEN HILLS	1
THURLGA	2
PANDURRA	2
MT IVES	2
SIAM	2
NONNING	2
HILTABA	2
LAKE EVERARD	2
MOONARIEKONDOOLKNA	2
KOLENDO	2
YARDEA	2
WARTAKA	2
CARRIEWERLO	2
YUDNAPINNA	2
YADLAMULKA	2
WILKATANA	2
NARCOONA	2
GASTON	1
TARCOOLA	1
NORTH WELL	1
WILGENA	1
COOK	1
NILPENA	2
EDEOWIE	2
COMMODORE	2
MORALANA	2
BELTANA	2
ANGORICHINA	2
PARACHILNA	2
SLADE	2
MOTPENA	2
MERNA MORA	2
BLINMAN	2

Appendix 1
South Australia continued

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
ARKAROOA	2
BULGUNNIA	1
MULGATHING	1
COMMONWEALTH HILL	1
DENTON	1
TWINS	1
KOKATHA	1
WHITE	1
INGOMAR	3
GLENDAMBO TOURIST CENTRE	3
BON BON	3
GLENDAMBO MOGAS	3
WIRRAMINNA	3
PEAKE STATION	2
ANNA CREEK	2
GEE	2
WRIGHTS AIR	2
COONDAMBO	2
ALLANDALE	2
WILLIAM CREEK	2
ALAWOONA	3
MERIBAH	3
PARUNA	3
TALDRA	3
TAPLAN	3
TARROWIE	3
HASLAM	4
FOWLERS BAY	3
KOONIBBA	4
SMOKY BAY	4
RUDALL	3
COCKALEECHIE	3
DONOVANS	3
LYNDHURST	2
Marree	2
COULTA	3
UNGARRA	3
VENUS BAY	3
WANGARY	3
WARROW	3
SALT CREEK	3
HALIDON	3
MARAMA	3
MINDARIE	3
SANDALWOOD	3
WANBI	3
NACKARA	4

Appendix 1

Northern Territory

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
DALY WATERS	3
NGUKURR	3
NUMBULWAR	3
KALKARINGI	3
LAJAMANU	3
YARRALIN	3
LARRIMAH	3
HODGSON DOWNS	1
ROBINSON RIVER	1
BULMAN	1
DUNMARRA	3
Aherrenge	1
Wallace Rockhole Community	1
Finke	1
Hermansburg	2
Ti Tree	3
Ali Curung	3
Willowra Community	1
Sta Teresa	1
Areyonga Community	1
Palumpa Community	2
Daly River (Naiyu Nambiyu)	2
Peppimenarti	2
Croker Island	4
Goulburn Island	4
Darwin River	3
Berry Springs	3
Douglas Daly Park	3
Dundee Beach	3
Lake Bennett	3
Oenpelli	3

Tasmania

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
Cape Barren Island	3

Appendix 1

Queensland

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
EURAMO LPO	2
LOCKHART RIVER	3
PORTLAND ROADS	3
AYTON	3
MAPOON	3
ENDEAVOUR FALLS	2
KOWANYAMA	4
LAURA	3
PORMPURA AW	3
CHILLAGOE	3
CAPE TRIBULATION CPA	2
COW BAY	2
DAINTREE	2
NAPRANUM	2
SOUTH END	1
PLUM TREE	2
DINGO BEACH	2
Turkey Beach	3
Ogmore	3
MIDGE POINT	3
GREENVALE	2
MCKINLAY	2
URANDANGI	2
ALPURRURULAM	3
DUCHESS	3
DAJARRA	2
BEDOURIE	2
WUJAL WUJAL	2
EINASLEIGH	2
ALMADEN	3
MOUNT SURPRISE	3
IRVINEBANK	3
SAIBAI ISLAND	3
BOIGU ISLAND	3
YORKE ISLAND	3
BADU ISLAND	3
ST PAULS (MOA IS)	3
KUBIN (MOA IS)	3
MABUIAG ISLAND	3
MURRAY ISLAND	3
STEPHENS ISLAND	3
COCONUT ISLAND	3
DAUAN ISLAND	3
WARRABAR (SUE IS)	3
YAM ISLAND	3

Appendix 1

Queensland continued

Office	Mail Processing Facility
ERUB (DARNLEY)	3
NEW MAPOON	2
SEISIA	3
INJINOO	3
UMAGICO	3
KARUMBA	3

New South Wales

Office	Number of Despatches Weekly
Tooma	3
Maude	3
Carrathool	3
Booligal	3
Brocklesby LPO	3
Balldale LPO	3
Jingellic LPO	3
Mount Hope SPB	3
Euabalong	3
Louth SPB	2
Tilpa SPB	2
Grawin	2
Ennogonia SPB	2
Caragabal	3
Burcher	3
Nangus	3
Quandialla	3
Wakool	3

Western Australia

Office	Mail Processing Facility
BEAGLE BAY	3
BIDYADANGA	3
DJARINDJIN	3
ONE ARM POINT	3
MOULYINNING	2
FORREST	1
DEANMILL	3
JIGALONG	2
PARNNGURR (Cotton Creek)	2
PUNMU	2
YANDEYARRA	3
OOMBULGURRI	2