

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**  
**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013**  
**Communications Portfolio**  
**Australia Post**

**Question No: 63**

**Program No. Australia Post**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Investment in Qld**

**Senator Macdonald asked:**

Question on Notice 169 from Budget Estimates May 2013 asked the Department to clarify the advice given at Additional Estimates in October 2012 to the effect that \$2 billion was to be invested in Australia Post with a "sizeable component" being spent in Queensland, and on North Queensland parcel processing.

These answers were given in response to a line of questioning regarding local resident noise complaints generated by after-hours parcel loading activities at the Rockhampton Mail Centre (RMC).

Correspondence regarding the egregious nature of noise impacts on local residents around the RMC continues to be received by the Office of Senator Macdonald.

In answer to Question on Notice 169 from Budget Estimates in May 2013 the Department indicated that:

- As at 30 April 2013 \$737.7 million of the \$2 billion investment had already been spent;
- The Rockhampton Mail Centre ***did not*** receive "any significant funding" under the \$2 billion funding program;
- That, despite previous notice regarding Rockhampton Regional Council by-laws relating to hours of operation and noise abatement, the Rockhampton Mail Centre continues to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.;
- That the Manager of the RMC visited local impacted residents in February 2013 and reported that there were no noise complaints;
- That the Department has introduced a range of measures to minimise the noise impacts of the RMC on local residents; and,
- That the Department has no plans to relocate the RMC.

1. How much of the \$1.26 billion portion that remained unspent in April has now been spent?
2. At Supplementary Estimates on 16 October 2012 Mr Fahour said:

*"That is why we announced a \$2 billion investment in Australia Post to secure our future. One of the opportunities we are investigating is the benefits that this investment will bring right across Australia. A sizeable component will be going into the great state of Queensland and the beneficiaries will be people in Queensland, particularly in North Queensland where we are expanding our parcel processing capability. That will create jobs and employment opportunities."*

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Can Australia Post identify which components of the \$2 billion will be of benefit “particularly in North Queensland”?

Can you also identify which “parcel processing capability” is being expanded in North Queensland that Australia Post identified in October 2012?

3. If the RMC did not receive “any significant funding” can you tell me what funding, if any, it did receive?
4. The Department did not answer question # 6 from Budget Estimates May 2013 QON 169. The question asked if any noise complaints had been received after October 2012. The answer ignores this question and instead tells a story about RMC management visits to local residents in Feb/March 2013.

I ask again: Were any noise complaints received after October 2012?

And if there were no noise complaints received after this time, then why did RMC management embark on a public relations exercise on the subject of noise abatement?

5. If there were no noise complaints made to the RMC manager when he visited local residents (answer # 6-7 Budget Estimates May 2013 QON 169) then why has Australia Post introduced a raft of measures at RMC to reduce noise impacts on local residents (answer # 8-10 Budget Estimates May 2013 QON 169)?
6. Has Australia Post now received the finalised survey results (answer # 6-7 Budget Estimates May 2013 QON 169) back from the Rockhampton regional Council? If so, what are the results? What action will Australia Post be taking based on these results?
7. Is it true that the RMC have advised that the use of the land as a mail centre contravenes Council Planning rules and but for the fact that Australia Post is Government Business Enterprise, it would be prosecuted?

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**Answer:**

1. From 1 May to 31 October 2013, Australia Post spent a further \$221.2m on strategic investments and asset replacement, bringing total spend under the \$2 billion program to \$960.9m.
2. Approximately \$61m of the \$2 billion investment program will be spent in Queensland. In particular, a new parcels processing site is being developed in North Brisbane, with anticipated costs of \$58.5m. Other projects planned include Northgate Mail Centre air conditioning replacement, Rockhampton Mail Centre dock renovation and Cairns Mail Centre/Delivery Centre works.
3. Specific funding relating to the Rockhampton Mail Centre (RMC) is as follows:

2012/13	-	\$0.2m	(Truck Ramp and Resurfacing of dock area)
2013/14	-	\$nil	
2014/15	-	\$0.3m	(Dock renovation)
4. No complaints have been received from residents since October 2012.
5. Australia Post has stated on numerous occasions that it will continue to work with the Rockhampton City Council to explore and implement any practicable measures that will assist in reducing noise levels at the RMC.
6. Australia Post wrote to Senator Macdonald on 13 November 2013 to advise him of the results of Rockhampton Regional Council's survey of local residents.

As indicated in Australia Post's letter, a total of 100 residents were surveyed, 33 residents returned completed surveys, of which 10 residents indicated they were inconvenienced by the noise from trucks, forklifts, pallet-jacks and the flood lighting in the rear car parks.

Based on the survey results, Australia Post will now investigate/implement the following measures:

Measures to alleviate noise issues:

- Investigate operating measures to stop noise from being produced such as:
  - Allowing trucks easier access into the facility from Elphinstone Street by opening the gate well before trucks arrive. This should help to prevent the application of air brakes and gear movements; and
  - ongoing training for forklift drivers in techniques to alleviate noise;

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- Install rubber matting that will be permanently positioned next to delivery trucks so that any pallets that are picked up by forklifts will be dropped onto this material and not concrete;
- Modify trucking operations with the aim of decreasing overall movements in/out of the facility;
- Construct an acoustically rated fence at the boundary of the RMC; and
- Reduce working hours on Sundays with the aim of stopping Sunday work after the heavy Christmas period. Work on Sundays would only be considered for those times of the year where the workload is exceptionally heavy (eg Christmas, Easter etc).

Measures to alleviate lighting issues:

- Install light shield onto the boom crane at the rear of the facility; and
- Install additional shrubs up at the back boundary of the RMC.

7. No.