

22.02.2024

To whom it may concern,

I oppose the proposed reforms of the draft Australian Postal Corporation (Performance Standards) Regulations 2019 on several grounds, all of which are informed by my belief that they are not fit for purpose.

I wish for my submission to be made public.

My first argument refers to the consistent failure of these reforms to address the abject nature of management at Australia Post. Not once in the years of discussion around modernisation of the corporation was there a trace of concern for the dissolute practices employed at the C-suite level. From Henry Belot in *The Guardian*: Non-executive staff received \$24 million in incentive payments ~~in~~ — in addition to their salary of \$235,000 — while eight executives received bonuses totalling \$4.45 million. These 370 employees received such alarmingly high bonuses at a time when Australia Post

was operating at a financial loss. What is more, these facts were overlooked during 2023's public consultation period. And of the CEO's remuneration package, only 25 per cent is tied to the corporation's performance. If there is to be proper reform, it must appraise the executive level as much as it focusses upon the consumer. Otherwise there is no real incentive for the CEO to perform; he will be paid, and rewarded, regardless.

My second argument relates to the price of stamps as part of the draft reforms. In raising the price to \$1.50 — a 25 per cent rise — this will represent part of the 200 per cent rise since 2004. By comparison, a Toyota Camry cost \$32,490 in 2004, and \$35,000 this year — a 7.7 per cent increase over the same time. Even the proposed increase to \$1.50 is well above inflation, and will doubtless deter many from sending letters — compounding losses in the letters business.



Moreover, the proposed deregulation of Priority Mail will lead to the end of the service, primarily for it is often regulations that keep a service afloat. Charging commercial rates, in addition to raising the price of stamps, will make the choice of using the postal service at all ~~an~~ a needless burden. Again, in the pursuit of long-term financial sustainability, this makes little sense.

My third argument concerns the increasing frequency of unfranked mail. As was reported by Peter Goers in the Adelaide Advertiser, many letters arrive unfranked. This is illegal as per the use of postage meters and the Performance Standards of the Act (1989). A stamp is both a form of currency and a receipt of service and, it must be said, it is quite rare to receive franked stamps — a personal disappointment for this writer, as I collect stamps. Yet, is it sustainable for

Australia Post to be operating when franking machines are not working and the franking standards are not being met?

The draft reforms say nothing in this regard, and the provided materials are much too vague to be accepted.

My fourth argument, the most important given how many people it affects, relates to the reduction of the letters service and the challenges to safety, both to the postal worker and customer, such a proposed reduction will cause.

The delivery trial, though of some merit, tells an incomplete tale. Unlike regular mail, parcels are seldom uniform in size or shape; even if the trial showed workers could carry 20 per cent more parcels on non-letter days, the burden will prove unsustainable over time. In the short term, there will clearly be less room for parcels on days of letters, and any conservation of mass will become a vanity in the process, slowing the worker down.



If parliamentarians or public servants were made to attend fewer daily meetings yet attend more conferences instead — at their own cost — the physical and mental toll would swell, reducing productivity in the process. We have seen this problem in the teaching profession, where administrative work has needlessly entered the classroom and overwhelmed many.

Furthermore, letters are a lifeline to most people who write them; they are the last selfless form of communication today. Letters cannot be hacked or interfered with via digital means, and nor can your identity be stolen in the post like it can be daily on computers and smartphones.

I am only a younger Australian, yet written correspondence is the sole way for me to keep in touch with family and friends. This is not because I am on a low income; it is how I was raised and nothing — nothing — is finer than finding mail in the letterbox. I, like many, ~~do~~ rely upon a

regular letters service, and yet, if these draft reforms proceed, I will be part of the forgotten people cast aside. Australians are egalitarians, I thought.

My final reason for opposing the draft reforms to the Act is one of cost: How can it be that sending postal workers to residential doors daily, though reducing letters to every other day, will reduce financial losses at Australia Post?

There is no analysis — other than anecdotal — which explains to the public how this change to Performance Standards as per the Act will improve financial sustainability.

For the reasons foregoing, I do not believe the draft reforms to modernise Australia Post are fit for purpose. I therefore oppose the adoption of the draft Regulations.

Yours very truly,

ANDERS ROSS

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