



Director, Postal Policy  
Communications Services and Consumer Division  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

By email: [postalconsultation@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:postalconsultation@infrastructure.gov.au)

**RE: Postal Services Modernisation**

To whom it may concern,

Tasmanian Branch of the Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing & Allied Services Union of Australia (CEPU Tasmanian Branch) is the principal union for workers in the communications, electrotechnology, and plumbing industries across Tasmania, representing thousands of critical workers around the state, including at the Australian Postal Corporation.

The Federal Government has played an active role in facilitating quality universal postal services, and the thousands of secure jobs that come with providing them, in some form or another since Federation, managing to continually adapt and maintain relevance through such technological disruptions as the introduction of the radio, telephone, and internet. This longevity is owed to the adherence to the simple principle that every Australian deserves reliable, affordable, and equitable access to postal services, a principle currently enshrined in legislation and regulations through community service obligations (CSOs). The shift towards a profit-focussed Government Business Enterprise (GBE) approach is a relatively new development and, in this context, we believe must be seriously re-examined when assessing structural barriers to the ongoing sustainability of Australia Post.

The CEPU Tasmanian Branch holds serious concerns that the Government's Postal Services Modernisation Discussion Paper is framed with the underlying assumption that the nature and structure of the Australian Postal Corporation (Australia Post) is somehow beyond reproach. The premise of this discussion paper, that the Government's primary concern in the face of major shifts in how postal services operate is how to maintain the profitability of Australia Post, is misguided. Our union asks that the Government consider how they might conduct a review that prioritises how to maintain quality service delivery and good, secure jobs across the sector rather than how best to emulate a private corporation in the administration of an essential public service. We have seen what the private sector has to offer in terms of parcel delivery services, and it is not good news for workers.

The provision of secure jobs with fair rates of pay and reasonable working conditions is a critical function of any essential public service. Currently, under its corporatized model, Australia Post employees are working harder than ever owing to growing parcel volumes and a vacancy rate over 10%, yet still only receive wages comparable to supermarket checkout workers. As letter mail continues to decline and Australia Post is increasingly forced to operate in competitive parcel and logistics markets against unscrupulous operators like Amazon with internationally renowned track-records for worker exploitation, it is not unreasonable to expect that under the current GBE model Australia Post will eventually be drawn even further into the race to the bottom for employment conditions to maintain market share and financial sustainability.



The Federal Government has on numerous occasions and through numerous senior ministers stated their commitment to ending the outsourcing and privatisation of essential public services. We contend that any proposal to deregulate priority letter services flies in the face of these commitments and functionally amounts to outsourcing. We also fail to see how the financial sustainability of Australia Post is improved by introducing competition from private entities with the ability to undercut Australia Post by offering substandard labour conditions.

Ultimately, CEPU Tasmania would be willing to engage with Australia Post on holistic avenues to trial new delivery methods and prioritise resource deployment in line with demand for services where appropriate. However, we believe that there first needs to be a concerted effort to address low wages and resulting high vacancy rates so that any future trials can give a full picture of these measures' effectiveness and potential higher applications.

Work is also needed to modernise the outdated industrial relations practices within Australia Post that are partially responsible for driving our concerns around wages, job vacancies, resource allocation, and workplace productivity. The CEPU Tasmanian Branch believes that postal workers are best placed to offer localised solutions to improve service delivery. A modernised approach that introduces a greater level of democracy to the workplace rather than entrenching the us vs them model of local management would improve productivity and employee engagement at minimal cost.

The degradation of working conditions in the parcel delivery sector through the proliferation of subcontractor outsourcing and gig work from private operators in our view warrants a case for investigating whether regulating parcel services would be in the national interest. This discussion paper is emblematic of the failed promise that spinning essential government services off into GBEs can maintain a high and equitable level of service delivery whilst being sustainably profitable. There is a clear need to examine the option of returning to a postal commission within government that can operate with a sole focus on its role as a facilitator of economic activity and secure work in every corner of the country. Whilst we don't deny that there may be a case for reassessing the suitability of the current community service obligations in the modern context, we find that the approach presented in the discussion paper stems from a reluctance to even consider avenues that may expand these obligations or call into question Australia Post's future as a Government Business Enterprise.

The Tasmanian Branch of the CEPU welcomes the opportunity to engage further with representatives from the Department and Australia Post on matters raised in this submission.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Anderson'.

Michael Anderson  
State Secretary  
CEPU Tasmanian Branch