



27 April 2023

Attention: Director  
Postal Policy - Communications Services and Consumer Division  
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Director

### **Postal Services Modernisation Discussion Paper**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Government's public consultation on modernising Australia's postal service.

#### **Introduction**

The Australian Passport Office, as a business division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the department), issues passports and travel documents to Australian citizens in Australia and overseas in accordance with the *Australian Passports Act 2005*, related Laws and the Conventions on International Civil Aviation. These documents facilitate international travel, serve as proof of identity and citizenship which enables citizens to access essential government and financial services, and are crucial for maintaining national security and preventing fraud.

Australia Post is a key service delivery partner for the department. The Australia Post network accepted over 2.7 million passport applications in the 12 months leading up to March 2023. Around 90 per cent of customers received their passport using Australia Post's domestic letter service. The balance of customers picked up their passport from a passport office, with many of these passports distributed by StarTrack from the bulk print centre to passport offices.

When international borders re-opened in November 2021, there was an unparalleled surge in demand for passport services. At its peak in June 2022, passport applications numbers were 70 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels. Throughout this period, Australia Post delivered a reliable service that facilitated Australians in applying for and receiving their passport.

#### **Postal Services and Modernisation Benefits**

Australia Post's services are a crucial component of the department's passport and travel document services, including:

- regional and remote postal service network, which enables equitable access to government services for all citizens, regardless of their location
- delivery service, which allows customers to receive their passport directly at their doorstep or collect it at a post office, offering convenience and enhanced identity security
- trusted brand and skilled workforce, which helps to provide a secure and reliable passport service.

The department remains committed to the modernisation of passport services through the adoption of digital solutions. The department envisions a future when citizens can renew their passport online, reducing the reliance on Australia Post outlets for application services. Reforms are in the conceptual design phase and will be considered as part of the Government's broader digital identity work underway.

### **Delivery Services**

The department's use of letter services is declining as the department increasingly relies on electronic messaging to communicate with customers. However, Australia Post's delivery services are the primary means of distributing passports to Australians. The department requires the highest levels of security and reliability for these services. We value security features, including tracking and signature upon delivery.

### **Accessibility of Services – points of presence**

Australians can access more than 1,600 Australia Post outlets, including in regional and remote Australia, to lodge their passport applications. The results of passport customer satisfaction surveys indicate that customers find attending a post office more convenient and accessible than attending the eight metropolitan based passport offices. Additionally, the surveys show customers have a high level of confidence (87 per cent) in the security of their personal information when using Australia Post.

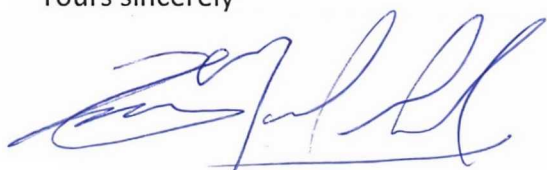
The department is exploring options to increase the use of Australia Post outlets as collection points, as recipients are increasingly not at home at delivery times. Around 70 per cent of passports are returned to the local post outlet for subsequent customer collection. Using Australia Post's parcel lockers for passport delivery has been considered. However, this would require Australia Post rules to be amended to allow letter products to be delivered through parcel lockers.

### **Support for Australians with Diverse Needs**

Australia Post's commitment and experience in supporting Australians with diverse needs is commendable. Capabilities and services, such as accessible post office locations, hearing loops, alternative delivery options for those who have difficulty receiving mail and language support, support improved access to passport services by people with a disability, individuals with English as a second language, or communities impacted by natural disasters.

The department is considering what additional support it can provide to individuals who face barriers to securing an Australian passport, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people escaping domestic and family violence, and unhoused Australians. The department would be interested in leveraging the Australia Post network of community organisations and charities to provide more intensive support for these individuals.

Yours sincerely



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