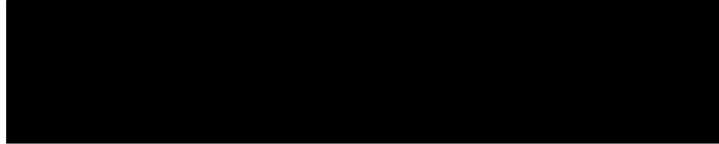




## CHIEF MINISTER

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Darwin NT 0801  
Telephone: [REDACTED]  
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Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence of 3 March 2023 inviting the Northern Territory Government to comment on the Postal Services Modernisation Discussion Paper. This is a matter of interest to the Territory, with many of our residents reliant on the multitude of services provided through postal outlets to stay connected, particularly those Territorians living in regional and remote communities.

The Northern Territory holds only 1 per cent of Australia's population, yet its land mass makes it the third largest Australian jurisdiction. As the northern capital, Darwin, together with Alice Springs in Central Australia, support a central spine of regional centres, which in turn sustain smaller regional and remote communities of primarily Aboriginal people living on their homelands. While the Discussion Paper does not appear to contemplate closure of regional and remote Australia Post services, the current financial issues being experienced by some contracted service providers are concerning. If critical Australia Post shop fronts were reduced in regional and remote areas, a significant impact would be felt by communities who rely on these sites for access to postal services, but also other essential services such as banking, and registration and licensing transactions.

Based on regional populations, the Northern Territory Government has identified gaps in postal services for some of our growing communities, for example the community of Robinson River does not have any post outlets, and is separated from its closest licensed post office in Borroloola for an average of 89 days per year due to weather events and road closures.

The Northern Territory Government is reliant on a consistent postal service to meet legislated obligations, for example service of letters and documents with associated statutory timeframes. Delayed delivery of some letters may result in fines, suspensions and court actions when mail is not received in a timely manner. In 2022, although 80 per cent of the Northern Territory Government's Motor Vehicle Registry notifications were distributed via email, approximately 220 000 letters were mailed out to customers, demonstrating the necessity of postal services for customers without email access, but also correspondence which cannot be distributed electronically, such as physical licences. The Northern Territory Government is also reliant on postal services to deliver important regulatory information to remote pastoral properties, and to foster the submission of critical biosecurity monitoring, such as laboratory samples, and for projects such as Citrus Watch.

Postal services are vital to ensure Territorians are able to participate in both Territory and national elections, and notably the upcoming referendum to recognise First Nations people in the Constitution. In areas where there is no postal delivery to street addresses, residents' details are not automatically updated through the Australian Electoral Commission's Federal Direct Enrolment Update (FDEU) program. The expansion of the FDEU program to include rural and remote communities and towns that have their mail delivered to post office boxes is a positive development. Through the expansion of the FDEU program, reliable postal services remain extremely important to enable voters to make their votes count. Limited postal services to remote areas can mean that postal votes are often unable to be returned within the two-week window before they are declared invalid.

Like Northern Territory Government services, I understand mail services are also heavily relied upon by key Commonwealth Government agencies, particularly for the administration of welfare and other entitlements by Services Australia. The importance of reliable access through post outlets is critical due to the prevalence of limited or unreliable telecommunication services and lower levels of digital literacy in remote and very remote areas.

Here in the Territory, we would welcome place-based approaches to the modernisation of postal services that could result in local employment and skills development or other collaborative opportunities. The Northern Territory Government is currently conducting a multi-agency Remote Service Standards project which is mapping service delivery to all 700 remote Aboriginal communities. This project creates opportunity for information and data sharing, as well as potential opportunities to explore the use of Corporate Post Office and Licensed Post Office locations as extended service delivery hubs. We would welcome discussions on this topic through [REDACTED] Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. [REDACTED] can be contacted by email [REDACTED] or telephone [REDACTED]

The ongoing investment by Australia Post to meet the evolving needs of its customers is highly valued, and I look forward to hearing of Australia Post's activities as it pursues the modernisation of services in a manner that ensures access is maintained for all Australians, particularly those located in regional remote areas.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

NATASHA FYLES

- 9 MAY 2023