

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Australia Post

Question No: 102

Australia Post

Hansard Ref: Written, 07/06/2017

Topic: Clearance of street post boxes

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Australia Post are changing practices around the clearance of street post boxes, from after 6pm to earlier in the day at a number of trial sites. Please provide all documents detailing consultation with business and general users in the trial sites.

Answer:

The change to clearance times has been managed in accordance with Australia Post's Group Street Posting Box Policy (**Attachment 1**). As outlined in the Policy, Australia Post consults with the community prior to any change being implemented, which includes notifying the local Federal MP (sample letter at **Attachment 2**) and placing a sign on the box for a minimum of 30 days (sample sign at **Attachment 3**).



Group Street Posting Box Policy

auspost.com.au

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Statement of Policy

Overview

Australia Post's Community Service Obligations (CSOs) outlined under the *Australian Postal Corporation Act* are in place to ensure that we provide all communities with fair and reasonable access to postal services.

Part of our CSOs pertain to the provision of mail lodgement infrastructure or our Street Posting Box network, mandating that we must maintain at least 10,000 Street Posting Boxes across Australia.

Our Street Posting Boxes are important assets that are valued by the community, particularly those members who are disadvantaged or have special needs such as people with disability, older citizens and communities in regional and remote locations.

The Street Posting Box Policy serves to ensure that we manage our Street Posting Box network in a responsible and appropriate manner that meets our business needs while maintaining community expectations. It ensures that we manage proposed changes fairly and consistently and that an appropriate level of consultation is undertaken with the community prior to network changes being made.

Rationale & Scope

The Street Posting Box Policy will:

- Support compliance with our Community Service Obligations for the provision of an accessible postal services.
- Guide decision making in relation to the management of our Street Posting Box network, providing clear guidelines for when changes can be made and how those changes are managed.
- Ensure that we apply a fair and consistent method when managing changes to the Street Posting Box network.
- Ensure that we undertake an appropriate level of community consultation prior to making changes to the Street Posting Box network.
- Help to protect Australia Post's brand and reputation, preserve relationships with Members of Parliament who represent the community, and protect the public's faith in Australia Post as a community-minded organisation dedicated to supporting all Australians, particularly disadvantaged communities.

Audience

Australia Post employees, our customers and their local representatives (Members of Parliament) and the general community.

This policy applies to employees and managers who manage and maintain our Street Posting Box network and the community consultation process including across the Australia Postal Group (APG). The APG is defined as the Australian Postal Corporation and its subsidiaries. This includes, but is not limited to, employees, contractors, licensees and franchisees of the APG.

Application

All managers and employees that manage the Street Posting Box network and the community consultation process must comply with the requirements set out in this policy.

Policy Principles

Our **Community Service Obligations** outline that we must maintain at least 10,000 Street Posting Boxes and that our services should be "reasonably accessible to all Australians where they reside". More information on our Community Service Obligations can be found on our website.

The policy expresses, in positive terms, the minimum standard for street posting boxes the community can rely on to meet their posting needs. The guidelines contained in the policy relate to the provision of street posting boxes, the removal, relocation or change to clearance times.

We will adhere to **Our Customer Commitment**, a statement describing the level of service customers can expect from us. Our Customer Commitment can be found on our website.

Any changes to the Street Posting Box network must be managed in accordance with this policy and Our Customer Commitment.

Awareness, Training & Induction

Any aspects of this policy affecting staff will be communicated directly to them.

The Policy will be made accessible to the general public via the internet (www.auspost.com.au)

Enforcement & Monitoring

Staff may be deemed to have failed to comply with this policy directly and or with its intent. Failure to comply with the intent of this (or any other) policy will be considered in breach of the requirements.

Employees acting or behaving in a manner that contravenes the principles outlined in this document are considered to be in breach.

Breaches will be subject to counselling or disciplinary action appropriate to the circumstances and seriousness of the behaviour.

Disciplinary action may include dismissal or termination of employment.

Breaches, Variations & Exemptions

Any exemptions to this policy must be approved by the Executive General Manager Postal Services

Reporting

Reports highlighting compliance with the policy will be produced as required.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure that it continues to meet business needs and community expectations.

Policy Guidelines

General

1. The spirit of this policy is to express, in positive terms, the minimum standard for street posting boxes the community can rely on to meet their posting needs.
2. The policy takes into account the general increased mobility of the population, constant demographic changes, shifts in posting habits and Australia Post's Community Service Obligation commitment to reasonable postal network access by its customers.

Provision

3. In capital city metropolitan areas and provincial cities, a street posting box facility will be provided at or near all postal outlets (a possible exception being outlets inside shopping centres that are not accessible after hours). In addition, street posting boxes will be provided to ensure that residents have access to a lodgement point within 2 kilometres.
4. In providing such facilities, Australia Post will give preference to locating street posting boxes at:
 - a) Regional and strip shopping centres
 - b) Commercial estates
 - c) Well-used railway stations and transport exchange points
 - d) Universities; and
 - e) Areas such as CBDs where heavy posting can be anticipated.
5. In rural towns and communities a street posting box facility will be provided in or near postal outlets.
6. Additional factors to be considered in site selection include:
 - a) Safe access, including good street lighting, for customers and Australia Post employees/contractors clearing boxes
 - b) Traffic restrictions and local/State laws and/or regulations
 - c) Customer access to nearby posting facilities; and
 - d) Community views/needs.
7. Consideration will be given to the provision of street posting boxes in special cases to cater for the needs of concentrations of people with special needs, including the elderly and people with disability, and hospitals.

Removal and relocation

8. From time to time consideration may need to be given to the removal or relocation of individual street posting boxes, where for example:
 - a) Safety factors for either customers or Australia Post staff have changed and the continued provision of the facility of considered dangerous (eg, changed road conditions or changed traffic flows)
 - b) The location of the facility is, or has become, contrary to Australian Road Rules
 - c) The average quantity of mail posted per day is less than 25 items and an alternative posting facility is available

- d) A postal outlet is relocated; or
 - e) Ongoing vandalism is a problem.
9. Australia Post may consider relocating a Street Posting Box from an area that is already adequately serviced by a number of other boxes and/or that is underutilised, to improve access to postal services to another area (eg, growth corridors, new developments).
10. Where a street posting box is being considered for possible removal/relocation, a consultation process will be undertaken to ensure community views or special needs (such as concentrations of the aged and people with disability) are taken into account.
- Specifically:
- a) The local Federal MP will be advised of the proposal and the rationale in advance
 - b) Other users of the street posting box will be informed via a sign on the street posting box (for a minimum of 30 days)
 - c) Any concerns will be discussed with respondents and the local Federal MP, and;
 - d) Once a decision has been made:
 - a. the Federal MP, businesses and respondents will be advised accordingly, including the reasons for the decision
 - b. Other users of the street posting box will be informed via a final sign on the street posting box which will include the date that the box will be removed or relocated.
11. No removal/relocation action will commence until the consultative process is completed and the decision endorsed by senior management.
12. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to expedite the relocation of a street posting box for emergency or safety reasons (eg changed traffic conditions, vandalism). Where practical, the abovementioned process will apply however it will be expedited with an appropriate timeline applied depending on the seriousness of the issue.

Clearance time changes

13. Australia Post reserves the right to adjust clearance times to ensure they best suit local operational arrangements (excluding boxes that are located outside post offices or densely populated areas (eg, CBD, shopping centres).
14. When adjusting clearance times, the Federal MP will be notified and the community will be provided with at least 30 days' notice of the changes through a sign posted on the box wherever network operations permit. Where an unforeseen network change beyond Australia Post's ability to control requires urgent clearance time change with less than 30 days' notice, Australia Post will provide as much notice as possible.

Roles & Responsibilities

Policy Governance

Requirement	Responsible area/Role	Activities
Enterprise Risk & Compliance must report on the implementation of governance frameworks and policies.	Enterprise Risk & Compliance	ERC will ensure appropriate governance mechanisms and frameworks are in place.
Accountable executive	Group Executive, eCommerce Delivery	To oversee the application of the policy.

Policy Operation

Requirement	Responsible area/Role	Activities
Identifying and managing the use of resources.	Managers	Fostering an environment that encourages compliance with the principles of the policy.
Comply with the regulatory obligations, policies and procedures. Undertake relevant training.	Employees	Complying with regulatory obligations, policies and procedures relevant to their work responsibilities and behavioural guidelines.

Policy Monitoring & Oversight

Requirement	Responsible area/Role	Activities
Compliance	eCommerce Delivery function	Oversee and ensure APG compliance to the principles of the policy.
Breach & Incident Reporting	eCommerce Delivery function	Will undertake remediation and reporting for related matters to Enterprise Risk & Compliance.
Periodic review to test policy implementation and accountable executives process for testing/validating compliance to this policy	Enterprise Risk & Compliance	Option to undertake periodic reviews to test policy implementation as per the policy cover sheet and Accountable Executive process for testing/validating compliance to this policy and reporting Breaches and incidents.

Requirement	Responsible area/Role	Activities
Periodic internal audit for compliance to the policy	Internal Audit	Option to undertake internal audits to determine level of compliance with the Policy, and ensure Breaches and Incidents are realised and reported appropriately

Classification: Public

Glossary

Term	Definition
APG	Australia Post Group (APG). The APG is defined as the Australian Postal Corporation and its subsidiaries.
CBD	Central Business District
MP	Member of Parliament
SPB	Street Posting Box

Classification: Public



1 May 2017



Dear [REDACTED]

Change to clearance times to some Street Posting Boxes in [REDACTED]

I'm writing to inform you of Australia Post's intention to change the clearance time of a number of Street Posting Boxes (SPBs) in your electorate.

As you may be aware, Australia Post's letter volumes have halved since 2008 due to businesses and consumers increasing their use of digital communications. This has had flow-on effects to our posties who year-on-year are delivering fewer letters to each delivery point.

Our posties are an important part of our business and the community, and we're committed to looking for ways to ensure their roles are sustainable. As letter volumes have declined over the years, we've been looking for ways to keep our posties in meaningful full-time jobs. One of the key initiatives introduced in 2012 was to divert the delivery of small parcels to our postie network. While this has helped, we need to do more.

Currently SPBs in regional areas are cleared by van. We'd like to transfer this work to posties, who can clear the SPBs when they return to the Delivery Centre after they've completed their daily deliveries. By transferring this work to posties, we free up van services to focus on other duties, such as customer collections.

As posties commence work early in the morning, we need to adjust the clearance time to align with when they typically return to base with an empty load. They can then collect the mail from the SPBs and return it to base for lodgement through our network. As such, the clearance time will be brought forward to 1pm (currently these boxes are cleared at 2pm - 4pm).

Importantly, boxes located outside post offices will continue to be cleared at close of business (generally 5pm or 6pm), so the community will still have access to the later clearance time if they need it.

In the next week we'll place a sign on impacted SPBs to notify the community of this change. The sign will remain on the box for 4 weeks providing ample notice prior to the change coming into effect. It will also advise them of alternative locations for the later clearance time should they require it. Members of the public will be directed to our Customer Contact Centre for any enquiries.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this initiative in more detail please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

Jared Newton
General Manager, Government Affairs



Important customer notice: **Change to clearance time**

Australia Post is committed to providing the community with a sustainable postal service.

With the ongoing decline in letter volumes, we're looking for ways to ensure our posties continue to play a relevant role in your community.

One of the ways we're doing this is to have posties clear some of the SPBs in this area. To enable this, we need to make a slight adjustment to the clearance time.

From Monday 28 November, the clearance time for this SPB will change to **1pm Monday to Friday.**

If you require a later posting time, SPBs located outside post offices will continue to be cleared at close of business.

For all enquiries please call our Customer Contact Centre of 13 POST (13 7678).