

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014

Communications Portfolio

Australia Post

Question No: 387

Program No: Australia Post

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing for mail security

Senator: Urquhart asked:

Has there been a reduction in the number of staff responsible for mail security and mail scanning?

- a. How have the staff numbers in this area changed:
 - i. in the past year
 - ii. in the past three years
 - iii. in the past five years
- b. What steps is Australia Post taking to ensure that the mail system is secure and robust?

Answer:

- a. The number of staffing in Australia Post's Security Group over the past 1, 3 and 5 years is as follows:

January 2015	34
January 2014	45
January 2012	51
January 2010	69

- b. The security of mail is managed by both the Security Group and the entire business. In this regard, Australia Post maintains a comprehensive set of processes to ensure the integrity of postal articles which are in the course of post. Among these processes:
 1. All staff and delivery contractors are vetted before engagement to ensure that they are of suitable character for employment;
 2. All staff (including contractors) are trained in relation to their legal obligations concerning postal articles under Commonwealth law, and potential penalties for breach;
 3. Mail handling facilities are monitored by a range of appropriate security measures;
 4. Random pro-active testing and checking of mail integrity occurs through the activities of the Security Group;
 5. All customer queries concerning delayed mail are assessed to identify any patterns, trends, or factors which may suggest unusual circumstances, and which indicate that investigation into possible interference with mail should take place;
 6. Issue and Threat escalation is communicated under the instruction of Pamphlets and Posters in all Post facilities, ensuring suspect items are dealt with in an appropriate manner. These include emergency and Security group local contact details; and
 7. A guide to Post office Security is available at all Post facilities.

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All mail (both domestic and international export) is examined in accordance with our Department Approved TSP (Transport Security Program). In addition, all export express post articles and all US outbound product (i.e. express and general mail/parcels) is X-ray screened subject to specific weight limits. Australia Post is working with the regulator to increase the amount of international export mail that is X-ray screened. All inbound scanning is the jurisdiction of Border Protection.