

SECTION 11

BOOKLETS, 1904–1973

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

This volume embraces all the stamp booklets issued by the Commonwealth of Australia from their introduction in 1904 up to their temporary discontinuation in 1973. This period corresponds to the time during which the Commonwealth Stamp Printer (later Note and Stamp Printer, and more formally, the Note Printing Branch) were solely responsible for the manufacture of stamp booklets.

Stamp booklets were introduced in Australia on 1 January 1904, nine years before the issue of the Kangaroo and Map stamps. Up to 1913, the booklets contained the issues of the six Australian States, but these items, together with the postage due stamps, have always been considered to be an important preliminary adjunct to an Australian Commonwealth collection. There are two reasons for this:

- (i) the booklet covers are inscribed "COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA".
- (ii) all the booklets were prepared by the Commonwealth Postmaster-General's Department, under the supervision of the Stamp Printer, J.B. Cooke. Initial supplies were prepared in Adelaide, and subsequent ones on Melbourne after Cooke's relocation there in 1909. Each of the States supplied sheets of stamps to Cooke to be made up into booklets.

Initially, the booklets provided contained £1 value of stamps, and two types were prepared, containing 1d or 2d stamps. These were sold at the face value of the contents, but the high selling price limited sales to the general public. The major user was business, and the inside covers were provided with a printed grid for accounting purposes. It has been suggested that these booklets may also have been used to some extent by small post offices as their counter stock, providing an easy means for dispensing and recording sales; there is no archival confirmation of this practice.

The £1 booklet containing 2d stamps was of limited use while this stamp represented the interstate rate, but with the introduction of 1d uniform postage on 1 May 1911 the small sales of this booklet dropped even further and it was discontinued. The £1 booklet with base letter rate stamps was maintained until 1930, when declining sales finally led to its discontinuation.

In 1910 a 2/- booklet containing 11 ½d and 18 1d stamps was introduced, ½d being charged for making up the booklet. This charge was not popular, and the booklet was changed the following year and an extra ½d stamp added to the contents. The make-up of ½d and 1d stamps enabled foreign postcard and letter rates to be made up, but in 1917 the inclusion of ½d stamps was discontinued, and from that time all booklets up to 1973 have contained, with few exceptions, only the base letter rate denomination. Postal rate information was printed on the covers, and this was subject to alteration as necessary.

Subsequent changes in the base letter rate saw corresponding changes in booklet content. The changes in base letter rate provide a convenient means of grouping the various issues of booklets, and have been used for this purpose in this catalogue.