

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH EDITION (2004)

This much-enlarged new edition includes for the first time those Australian States' stamps issued under the authority of the Commonwealth Postmaster-General's Department between 1901 and 1912. These issues were produced by four different printing establishments, using paper and equipment that differed between each other and from that which was standardised with the introduction of the Kangaroo stamps in 1913. These issues are complex, and although a certain amount of research has been undertaken in the past, that work has been unevenly distributed and has concentrated on the more popular issues. Some new research has been incorporated here, including fresh archival data, and thanks are due to all those who have collaborated on this project. Their names are listed in the acknowledgements. There will undoubtedly be many corrections and additions to the current listing in future editions, but it is hoped that catalogue users will appreciate this first attempt at a truly specialised catalogue of this fascinating period of Commonwealth stamps.

The Kangaroo issues themselves have not been neglected. Most notably, extensive revisions and additions have been made to the plate variety listings of a number of values. Those for the ½d, 1d, 2d, 2½d and 3d are based on the published and unpublished researches of Greg Pope, and for the 9d on the published work of David Banwell and Bob Parsons. The latter includes perhaps the most interesting of all the new listings, the substituted clichés on the 9d in Third and later watermarks. John Bozic has also made numerous suggestions and pointed out a number of corrections to previous editions.

The plate varieties on the bicoloured high values have also been completely revised based on the work carried out in the 1960s by W.M. Holbeach which was unfortunately not published and never reached the wide audience it deserved. The sliced "P" variety has been added to the Type C SPECIMEN overprints.

Throughout the listings, wherever possible, the line drawings of the plate varieties previously used have been replaced by scanned images.

There have been relatively few major discoveries affecting the footnotes, but the popularity and demand for monograms and imprints has resulted in the appearance on the market of a number of these rarities which has resulted in revision of the numbers known. The most remarkable of these was the appearance of a Harrison imprint block of 4 of the 2/- brown Third Watermark, whose existence had been doubted.

The Market

Since the publication of the Third Edition (1999), the demand for fine and rare material in the Kangaroo and Map issues has been unprecedented. The appearance on the market of several significant long-term holdings has further stimulated this market, resulting in price levels undreamed of previously. The greatest strength has been in monograms and imprints, essays and proofs, and major printing and perforation errors. The rarity of the high value monograms and imprints has been recognized for some time, and their popularity has been translated to many of the lower denominations, where the supply in many cases is not significantly greater. Essays, proofs, and major errors have also shown significant price increases and continue to attract great interest on the infrequent occasions examples become available. The last two years has seen intense activity for certain abnormal watermark varieties, and while the current high prices could be seen to be disproportionate to their philatelic importance, of their rarity there is no question. Also evident for some time now is an increasing demand for fine single stamps, with considerable premiums being paid for perfection.

Perhaps as a corollary to the strength of the Australian Commonwealth market, there has also been a considerable increase in interest in Australian Colonial stamps, including the Federal Period now covered in detail in this catalogue. Some of this activity may be the result of an increasing awareness that the States' issues of this period are, in reality, Commonwealth issues. Demand is uneven across the States, with perhaps Queensland and Western Australia the strongest. The few essays and proofs available for the 1901-12 issues of all States are keenly sought after, as are many of the individual stamp rarities. The most spectacular of these is the Queensland 6d "Figures in Lower Corners", which has shown a remarkable price increase over recent years. Probably the key stamps of this period are the rare perforation varieties of each State. The difficulty of these items is generally unrecognized, and significant price movement could be expected if only a few more collectors enter this area.