

INTRODUCTION

Postage due stamps were introduced in Victoria on 1 November 1890, and in New South Wales on 1 January 1891. Only Trinidad amongst British Colonies preceded the two Australian Colonies. In each case, the postage due stamps had a common design in which the denomination featured prominently, and all values in each series were printed in the same colours. The Victorian stamps are unusual in being bicoloured, which involved extra expense for what was a utilitarian series not intended for use by the public.

Following Federation, the Postmaster-General's Department decided to extend the use of postage due stamps to the other States. The New South Wales design was chosen, suitably adapted, and these stamps were printed at the New South Wales Government Printing Office in Sydney. First issued in July 1902, these postage due stamps were intended for use in all States other than Victoria, which continued to use its own design. Following the establishment of the Commonwealth Stamp Printing Office in Melbourne under J.B. Cooke in 1908, the opportunity was taken to create a Commonwealth postage due series, based on the bicoloured Victorian design, for use in all States. This was first issued in July 1909. The postage due design remained essentially unchanged until postage due stamps were discontinued on 31 January 1963.

USAGE

Postage due stamps were never intended for use by the public, and were never sold across post office counters except for philatelic purposes. The major use of postage due stamps was to indicate the amount of postage to be collected on mail which was underpaid. Postage due regulations and practice are beyond the scope of this catalogue, but the general rule was that an amount equal to double the deficient postage was collected from the addressee, although there are a number of exceptions to this, and postage due on international mails is a complex subject. The sending office identified underpaid items and indicated the amount to be collected in manuscript or by handstamp on the face of an article. At the delivery office, postage due stamps of the appropriate amount were affixed, and following collection of this money, the stamps were cancelled. Much of this money was collected by letter carriers, who often cancelled the stamps in manuscript. Such stamps are worth less than postmarked examples.

Higher value postage due stamps were often used to indicate the total amount of money to be collected on a batch of letters to the one addressee, rather than franking each letter individually. High values were also used by the Post Office for purposes other than postage due involving internal accountancy. This includes the payment of bulk postage, and the balancing of accounts between offices. The majority of such stamps were destroyed internally and have not come into collectors hands. The stamps were also used for the payment of customs duty on dutiable items arriving by post in Australia. In particular, the ½d value was important for this function.

AVAILABILITY

Initially, regulations precluded the sale of Victorian and New South Wales postage due stamps to the public, but pressure from stamp collectors led to both Colonies making cancelled-to-order sets available from about 1894. There is no evidence that mint stamps were ever sold to collectors, although sufficient quantities exist today to indicate that, with the help of postal officials, collectors found their way around this prohibition.

With the introduction of the Commonwealth series from 1902, the same regulations remained in force - no mint stamps would be sold, and only cancelled-to-order sets could be obtained. Repeated requests from dealers and collectors eventually had the desired effect, and from May 1904 it was announced that uncanceled or cancelled stamps could be obtained, of any denomination or quantity, at face value. Officially, application had to be made to the deputy Postmaster-General at the G.P.O. in each State, although it is believed that across counter sale was arranged, at least in some States. This situation remained until 1953 with the establishment of Philatelic Bureaux in each State, at which time philatelic sales of postage due stamps became their responsibility.

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