

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION OF COMMONWEALTH POSTAL STATIONERY

Following Federation in 1901, each of the Australian States continued to issue its own postage stamps while awaiting the introduction of a uniform stamp issue. Various changes were necessary in view of new postal legislation which separated the postal and revenue functions of the existing adhesives. The same applied to the existing postal stationery - each State continued its own issues, with some design changes.

As is well-known, the preparation of a uniform stamp issue met many obstacles and it was not until the beginning of 1913 that the new stamps (the Kangaroo and Map design) were issued.

In the preceding years, however, some measures towards uniformity were adopted. These included the centralisation of stamp printing in Melbourne, and from 1902 the stamps of Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia were printed there. New South Wales and Queensland continued to print their own stamps and stationery up to 1913 (with the notable exception of the 9d Commonwealth design printed in Melbourne). A Commonwealth Stamp Printing Office was established in Melbourne in 1909 under the control of the South Australian Stamp Printer, J.B. Cooke, who moved to Melbourne, bringing South Australian stamp production with him.

Some progress was made towards providing a standard range of postal stationery in each State, and most notably Western Australia from 1902 and South Australia after 1909 added new classes of stationery, all printed in Melbourne. Queensland added registration envelopes in 1905, and these were printed in Brisbane, and in 1912 in Melbourne.

A major obstacle to the issue of a uniform stamp series was the imposition of book-keeping clauses in Commonwealth legislation designed to ensure that each State received its fair share of revenue from former State Government Departments that had been transferred to the Commonwealth. These arrangements were discontinued after 13 October 1910.

It appears that some time later the Commonwealth Stamp Printer, J.B. Cooke, commissioned the engraving of a 1d stamp die featuring a full-face portrait of King George V for postal cards and lettercards and as a possible design for a new Commonwealth stamp series. This die was engraved by Samuel Reading of Melbourne, and completed in August 1910, but was rejected for stamps, primarily because George V had expressed his desire for his portrait to be on the stamps, but not before the issues of stamps bearing his portrait in Great Britain.

Cooke then appears to have adopted the design for use on postal stationery, a major impetus being the desire to issue this new Commonwealth stationery in time for the Coronation in June 1911. This was achieved with 1d postal cards being issued at the beginning of April 1911, and 1d lettercards a month later. Also during May a special 1d Coronation issue of postal cards was made, printed in various colours and featuring portraits of the Royal Family.

The Coronation postal cards were issued in all States, but the ordinary 1d postal cards and lettercards were issued only in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. Queensland and New South Wales continued to use their own designs, except that Queensland adopted the Commonwealth lettercards from June 1912.

Thus, Commonwealth postal stationery preceded the issue of adhesive stamps by some 20 months. There may have been an intention to issue others classes of stationery in the George V Full-face design, but these did not eventuate. Envelopes, registration envelopes, and wrappers were only issued after 1913, using the Kangaroo and Map design.

CLASSES OF STATIONERY

This catalogue attempts to list all denominated postal stationery issued under the authority of the Commonwealth Postmaster-General's department between 1911 and the discontinuation of the production of stationery at the Note Printing Branch, Melbourne in around 1981-82 (dates vary with the different classes of stationery).

Post Office Stationery

In that period, the Post Office placed on public sale seven classes of stationery:

Postal Cards - from 1911 until their discontinuation on 30 June 1959.

Lettercards - from 1911 to 1982.

Envelopes - from 1913 to 1978.

Registration Envelopes - from 1913 up to their discontinuation in 1968.

Wrappers - from 1913 up to their discontinuation in 1981.

Lettersheets - 1961 up to their discontinuation in 1968.

Aerogrammes - from 1944 to 1981.

These various classes are dealt with in more detail in the Introductions to each Section.

Military Stationery. There are two classes of stationery that have traditionally been classified as 'Military'. These are the World War I Envelopes and Lettercards for use by the public in writing to Australian Forces overseas. These are thus really special types of ordinary Post Office stationery and 'Military' only in the sense of the inscriptions on them. They were not for the use of the Australian Forces, which enjoyed free postage. All printing on these envelopes and lettercards was made at the Note Printing Branch.

While acknowledging the true status of this stationery, this catalogue follows philatelic precedent and places these in their own sections.

Stamped-to-Order Stationery

The Post Office provided a facility for large users to apply stamp impressions to their own stationery. The regulations relating to this facility varied over the years and are dealt with more fully in the introduction to the various Stamped-to-Order stationery sections.

The service was available for all the classes of stationery produced for Post Office sale, but impressed stationery could also be supplied on other types of stationery, governed by the determination of the Note Printing Branch that suitable impressions could be made. Orders for stamped-to-order stationery were sent from the relevant post office direct to the Note Printing Branch enclosing payment for the postage to be impressed plus the relevant printing charge. On completion of the order, the stationery was sent to the Distributor of Stamps in each State for return to the user.

Thus the following types of stationery are recorded stamped-to-order:

Postcards

Lettercards

Envelopes

Registration Envelopes. This is a rare class found using only the George VI registration envelope dies. Earlier envelopes are known from the same user to meet the registration rate, but these use ordinary dies and have therefore been classed as 'Envelopes'.

Wrappers

Lettersheets. Although very scarce, unlike the Post Office lettersheets, these are recorded throughout the whole period from 1913.

Parcel Labels. Best known for the 3/7d and 5/10d food parcels labels of the late 1940s, but there are also very rare earlier parcel labels for magazine postings.

Following postal rate changes, it was possible for stamped-to-order users to return their stamped stocks to the Note Printing Branch for uprating or downratings. In the former case this was achieved either by surcharging, or by the addition of a second (or in one instance, a third) stamp impression beside the first one. For downrating, surcharging was necessary, with an appropriate credit. This re-rated stamped-to-order stationery is the source of a large number of the rarest stationery items.

Unlike some overseas countries, Commonwealth stamped-to-order stationery is not bedevilled by large numbers of philatelically-inspired stamping-to-order. Virtually all the pre-decimal stamped-to-order stationery was produced for commercial purposes, and one result of this is that in many instances mint stationery is very rare.

It is emphasised that the only printing on stamped-to-order stationery by the Note Printing Branch was the stamp impression. All other printing was added by the private user and is beyond the scope of this catalogue. This additional printing may however affect the value of any piece of stationery, since many items (envelopes and postcards in particular) bear additional attractive (and sometimes multicoloured) illustrations.

Although some archival records for the production of stamped-to-order stationery are available, especially in the period 1913 to 1928, no

complete list of users has been found, the only exception being for Tasmania in the period from 1933. The only means of determining users is from the private printing on this class of stationery. For common forms of stationery (such as letter rate envelopes) the number of users of any particular issue numbers in the hundreds. For scarcer issues, the recorded users are listed. These listings should not be considered comprehensive, and in many cases additional users will exist.

World War II Prisoner-of-War Stationery. One further category of stamped-to-order stationery is listed. These are the World War II 6d airmail postal cards and 1/- airmail lettersheets produced for use by prisoners-of-war held in Australian camps. There is also an example of a 5d airmail lettersheet recorded for use by Japanese prisoners.

These bear simple denominated designs for their stamp indicia, and it is now possible, with access to archival records, to know that these dies were manufactured at the Note Printing Branch and impressed there on stationery provided by the Department of the Army. It is on this basis that this stationery is listed here. It should be noted, however, that the status of this stationery is questionable. It is likely, from the point of view of the Postmaster-General's Department, that these stamp impressions were in the same class as any other postage paid impressions which were permitted from the 1930s onwards. In this period many firms designed such postage paid impressions for their bulk mailings, and were allowed to use attractive designs and include a denomination. All these were privately printed and are outside the scope of this catalogue.

Official Stationery

Official stationery is defined here as stationery stamped with special dies inscribed 'OS' within the design. At first these were ordinary dies in which the letters 'OS' were drilled resulting in the letters appearing as colourless dots. Later the 'OS' was engraved into the design. These dies were in use only from 1913 to 1933, when they were discontinued at the same time that 'OS' punctures and overprints on adhesive stamps were withdrawn.

These special OS dies were used on stationery ordered by Government Departments (Commonwealth or State) and are found on the following classes of stationery:

- Postal Cards
- Envelopes
- Wrappers
- Lettersheets

The policy governing the use of these special dies has not been discovered. Although possibly intended only for use of Commonwealth Department stationery, instances are also found of use on State Department stationery, of which the most numerous are the many types of Victorian Education Department stationery.

After 1933, Government Department stationery was impressed with ordinary dies.

Other than the use of the special 'OS' dies, this stationery was treated the same as any other stamped-to-order stationery - it was ordered by the relevant Government Department, who paid the Note Printing Branch in the usual manner, and received the stationery back via the State Distributor of Stamps.

Official Overprints and Punctures. There are two instances of the use by State Government Departments of special overprints or punctures on ordinary Post Office stationery.

South Australia. Postal cards, lettercards and wrappers supplied to South Australian Government Departments in the period 1911 to about 1918 received an 'O.H.M.S.' overprint either above the stamp impression or above the inscription (on postal cards). This overprint was presumably applied by the South Australian Government Printer. These overprints are listed as varieties of the ordinary Post Office stationery. After 1918, for a short period, an 'O.H.M.S.' handstamp was used for the same purpose; it has been seen only on lettercards.

New South Wales. Postal cards and lettercards (rare) punctured 'OS/NSW' are recorded between 1912 and about 1945. The puncture was applied by the New South Wales Government Printer on ordinary Post Office stationery.

In recent years forgeries of the 'OS/NSW' puncture have appeared in the market place which are dangerous, so care should be taken. In addition, 'T' punctures (for Tasmania) have also surfaced. The genuine use of 'T' punctures on Commonwealth stationery has yet to be demonstrated.

Use of Ordinary Dies. As noted above, the use of special 'OS' dies was discontinued in 1933, and after that date ordinary dies were used on

stationery ordered by Government Departments, both Commonwealth and State.

In addition, many instances of stationery ordered by State Government Departments prior to 1933 stamped with ordinary (not 'OS') dies occur. All such instances represent ordinary stamped-to-order stationery, listed under the appropriate issues in the relevant stamped-to-order sections.

Some collectors in the past have placed a special significance on all Official stationery, whether bearing special 'OS' dies or not, and have considered any variations of the other printing on the envelopes as of importance. This has extended to local government impressed stationery, especially 'Shire' envelopes. However, all such printing on this stationery was made by the user, and is of no greater significance than the printing added to stationery by any other private user. It is therefore afforded no special treatment in this catalogue.

STATIONERY OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE CATALOGUE

There are several classes of stationery that have been listed elsewhere as Commonwealth postal stationery that are considered outside the scope of this catalogue. These are various types of military stationery that, while conforming to Australian Post Office regulations, and often bearing a printed denomination, were privately printed under the authority of the Department of Defence. These are as follows:

- World War I prisoner-of-war printed stationery providing free postage for prisoners. These bear various printed franks incorporating the word 'FREE'.
- Unstamped lettercard for free distribution to Australian forces in World War I. This was printed at the Commonwealth Stamp Printing Office.
- Unstamped Field Service postcards of both World Wars.
- Envelopes and airmail lettersheets for Australian Forces in Malaya in World War II, bearing denominated printed franks in red, for 12c, 25c or 1d.
- World War II unstamped prisoner-of-war stationery.
- 1949 wrappers for posting World War II medals, for Army, Air Force and Navy, with 4½d printed denomination.

SEQUENCE OF LISTINGS

The various classes of stationery have been listed in this catalogue in the order of first issue of Post Office stationery. This order, with the prefixes used for each class of stationery, are as follows:

P	POST OFFICE POSTAL CARDS
PS	STAMPED-TO-ORDER POSTAL CARDS
PO	OFFICIAL POSTAL CARDS
LC	POST OFFICE LETTERCARDS
LCS	STAMPED-TO-ORDER LETTERCARDS
LCM	MILITARY LETTERCARDS
EP	POST OFFICE ENVELOPES
ES	STAMPED-TO-ORDER ENVELOPES
EO	OFFICIAL ENVELOPES
EM	MILITARY ENVELOPES
RE	POST OFFICE REGISTRATION ENVELOPES
RES	STAMPED-TO-ORDER REGISTRATION ENVELOPES
W	POST OFFICE WRAPPERS
WS	STAMPED-TO-ORDER WRAPPERS
WO	OFFICIAL WRAPPERS
LSP	POST OFFICE LETTERSHEETS
LSS	STAMPED-TO-ORDER LETTERSHEETS
LSO	OFFICIAL LETTERSHEETS
PLS	STAMPED-TO-ORDER ADDRESS AND PARCEL LABELS
POW	PRISONER-OF-WAR STATIONERY
A	AEROGRAMMES
AM	MILITARY AEROGRAMME
AO	OFFICIAL AEROGRAMMES
AT	TEST AEROGRAMMES

Under each issue, the following sequence of listings is followed:

Dies, Text Settings and Shades: Listed under capital letters A, B, C, etc.

Paper Varieties: Different paper or card stocks are prefixed using bracketed numbers (1), (2) etc.

Printing Varieties: Including printing errors, misprints, albino

impressions, or listed additions to the stationery such as the 'O.H.M.S.' overprints or 'OS/NSW' punctures. Listed under letters **c**, **ca**, **cb**, etc.

Plate Varieties: Constant flaws on the stamp impression. Listed under letters **d**, **e**, **f**, up to **v**.

Cancelled-to-Order: All instances of cancelling-to-order are for U.P.U. distribution. Listed under **w**.

Specimen Overprints: Listed under **x**.

First Day Cancellations: Listed under **y**.

The complex pictorial lettercards of 1911-1925 have required special treatment. All the various views and their sub-types have been illustrated and have been given a numerical designation, with subtypes being given an additional letter designation (e.g. 67A, 67B, 67C etc.). The views which are found on each lettercard issue are identified by these numbers.

Essay and proof material of any stationery is placed before the listing of that item, and has been indicated by the use of the following letter suffixed designations:

Essays: Listed under **E**.

Die Proofs: Listed under **DP**.

Stationery Proofs: Including colour trials. Listed under **P**.

Each different class of proof is indicated by a bracketed number, e.g., 3P(1), 3P(2), etc., and variations within each class, for example different colours, are indicated by letters A, B, C, etc., giving 3P(1)A, 3P(1)B, 3P(1)C, etc.

It should be noted that only those proofs held in private hands are listed. Occasional reference is made to proofs in archival sources, but these are not listed, and many are held in both the National Philatelic collection of Australia Post, and at the Reserve Bank of Australia, Sydney.

SYMBOLS USED IN THIS CATALOGUE

- ★ Mint
- ⊙ Used

PRICES

The prices for mint stationery are for clean examples in fine condition. Rare items may not exist in perfect condition.

Prices for used examples are likewise for examples in fine commercially used (i.e. addressed) condition. Envelopes are expected to be slit open on one side but with flap otherwise intact. Lettercards ordinarily had the outer perforated border removed.

Prices provided for stamped-to-order stationery are minimum prices. Various factors relating to the user and the additional printing on the stationery will often add a premium to the item.

A dash in a pricing column indicates that the item does not or is not known to exist in that form, although it may well be found in the future.

As a rule, cut-outs have not been priced. However, there are a number of stamped-to-order issues of which only one or two entires are recorded, or which are unrecorded in entire form. In those instances, cut-outs have been priced in the footnotes.

There are also a number of issues which archival records prove were printed and for which there is no reason to doubt these were issued. These are listed with full catalogue numbers, but without prices.

THE PRODUCTION OF POSTAL STATIONERY

All Commonwealth postal stationery issued under the authority of the Postmaster-General's Department between 1911 and 1966 was printed at the Note Printing Branch in Melbourne.

Other than the 1911 1d Full-face George V die, and the 1916 ½d, 1d and 2d 'Star,' embossing dies, all of which were engraved under private contract by Samuel Reading of Melbourne, all other designs, dies, printing plates and printing electros were manufactured at the Note Printing Branch.

The various indicia used for impressing postal stationery are illustrated on pages x-xiv.

A brief history of the Note Printing Branch up to 1966 follows:

1909. A Stamp Printing Branch of the Commonwealth Treasury Department was established in Melbourne, with J.B. Cooke as the Commonwealth Stamp Printer.

May 1918. J.B. Cooke retired, and the Stamp Printing Branch was

abolished as a separate entity. The printing of Commonwealth postage stamps was made the responsibility of the Note Printing Branch, which originally was a branch of the Treasury Department. T.S. Harrison, Note Printer and Engraver, succeeded Cooke as Australian Note and Stamp Printer.

1924. Note and Stamp Printing Branch transferred to the control of the Commonwealth Bank.

February 1926. A.J. Mullett, retired Victorian Government Printer, acted as Australian Note and Stamp Printer until a successor to Harrison arrived from Great Britain in June 1927.

June 1927. John Ash, born in Perth, Scotland, was Printing Manager of De La Rue & Co. before coming to Australia. He was the first Stamp Printer to take a real interest in the quality of stamps produced, and the changeover from letterpress to recess-printing was effected in the early 1930s. Ash retired on 19 April 1940 and died on 28 November 1947, aged 75 years.

April 1940. W.C.G. McCracken, OBE. In his tenure of 23 years, the successor of Ash saw the installation of more equipment and the introduction of photogravure techniques and facilities. Contrary to suggestions that political factors were responsible, McCracken when he retired on 22 March 1963 disclosed that he had suggested ending the Australian tradition of printers' personal monograms and imprints, and the introduction in 1942 of the impersonal "By Authority" imprint. He received the O.B.E. in the 1963 Birthday Honours.

1959. The establishment became known as the Note Printing Branch of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

April 1963. W.H. Wilcock, CBE, succeeded as General Manager in a period of technical developments, including the use of plastic in plate production, the introduction of helicon, additional equipment and the conversion to decimal issues in 1966.

This catalogue provides a large amount of new information concerning the printing instruments used for the production of Commonwealth postal stationery. This has been derived from the archival records of the Note Printing Branch held at the Reserve Bank of Australia, Sydney. Records from the period up to 1920 are more or less complete, but there are gaps in the later records. It is very likely that in the future some corrections and revisions will be necessary.

Printing and Quantities. The Note Printing Branch records provide an almost complete listing of the printings made up to the late 1920s, and the Postage Stamp Stock Book gives a complete daily record of deliveries into stock and issues from stock of all postal stationery up to the middle of 1928, for both Post Office and stamped-to-order stationery. This enables a fairly accurate listing of the printing quantities in this period, but it should be understood due to the manner of listing stamped-to-order stationery, distinctions between the various classes of stationery are sometimes obscure, and the conversion of uprated and downrated stationery can be difficult to identify. Nevertheless, the information provided for this period is largely new and mostly accurate.

However, other than for a few short periods, detailed records of printings and quantities after 1928 are not yet available. One notable exception is the record of Tasmanian stamped-to-order stationery from 1933, for which complete delivery records have been found. The only other records for much of the later period are annual deliveries from the Note Printing Branch to the Post Office. With the appearance of the *Philatelic Bulletin* in 1953, some more detailed production figures of specific Queen Elizabeth issues were published.

Dates of Issue. The lack of interest in postal stationery over the greater part of the period covered by this catalogue means that the contemporary philatelic literature is of limited value in providing information on many of the issues. The Note Printing Branch records provide printing and delivery dates for most issues up to 1928 which define the earliest possible date for any issue. However the actual date of issue is usually unknown; records of early dated examples are provided where possible, but much more work needs to be done in this area.

The situation is worse for the period between 1930 and 1953, when the philatelic journals are virtually silent on postal stationery matters, and the relative lack of Note Printing Branch records makes the determination of the dates of appearance of various postal stationery issues a matter of informed guesswork. Future research in available Post Office records may eventually fill this gap. From 1953, the *Philatelic Bulletin* usually provides detailed information on the issue of new postal stationery.

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