

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION (2015)

The Third Edition of the Queen Elizabeth II section of the *Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue* is some 20 pages larger than the second edition of 2006. There are signs of some increasing interest into researching these issues, and the few new findings that have been made have been incorporated into the listings. Further releases of Note Printing Branch archive material to the Reserve Bank of Australia in Sydney has meant that all the files for the issues covered by this volume are now available. It is believed, therefore that information on all the printing instruments used, as well as quantities printed, is now as accurate as it can be.

Relatively few new plate varieties have been added, but some additional illustrations are now included. Some new plate numbers have come to light, and some corrections made to the notes regarding the numbers known for many of these.

A number of new essays and proofs have been added. These result from the release of the archive of Courvoisier of Switzerland (the 1956 2/- Olympic Games), and also several new Harrison essays of the 1/- of the same issue are listed for the first time. New essays relating to the introduction of photogravure in Australia are also listed for the first time. These were known from the Australia Post archival collection but were not thought to exist in private hands. It is possible that other essays of this sort will appear in the future.

The Market

The market for basic Queen Elizabeth II stamps has been stagnant for some time, and remains so, and this new edition reflects this insofar as no significant price changes have been made. Consistent with the King George VI catalogue release earlier this year, a base price of \$1 has been placed on all stamps, mint or used. This is intended to represent a reasonable handling charge for retail sale, rather than an accurate valuation.

The market for specialised and unusual material is quite strong. Demand for essays and proofs is variable, and the demand for the presentation die proofs in sunken mounts has been steady rather than spectacular. Other proofs are more popular.

Plate numbers continue to be in demand. This area differs from the King George VI period in that there are a group of plate numbers that are relatively common (for example, the 1954 Red Cross, and the 1959-62 coil sheet numbers), whereas all others are of considerable rarity, and often unique.

Rare printing and perforation errors also remain strong, and of most of these only very limited quantities exist. On the next level of rarity, misplaced perforations, offsets and similar varieties are very popular and their prices have increased considerably.

The biggest movement in the current catalogue has been in the value of constant plate varieties. The real scarcity of many of these, especially in the intaglio issues, is only now being appreciated, as is their difficulty of acquisition. The rarities in this field have been increased somewhat in price, as demand continues for those, but the greatest increases are at the lower level. It is also the case that mint examples, due to the efforts of contemporary collectors, are often more easily found than used, so the difference in price between mint and used has been reduced in most instances.