

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOURTH EDITION (2019)

This fourth edition of the Queen Elizabeth II section of the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue appears some four years after the third edition. As for the recent revisions of Kangaroos and King George V, this is the first edition of Queen Elizabeth II in full colour. This is also the first of the Brusden-White catalogues to be produced in A4 size, following the format of the Postal Stationery catalogue. This larger size has been introduced to accommodate a major new pricing innovation. Two cover prices are now provided, one for the solo usage of the stamp on cover, and a second for other uses of the stamp, either in multiple form or in combination with other stamps (whichever is the cheaper). This reflects a burgeoning interest in this field of collecting, and the prices for a number of the cover categories will surprise some. At the same time the opportunity has been taken to increase the font size, which will also be welcomed by many.

The new format has also enabled a number of new illustrations of various printing and perforation errors to be included.

The listings have been fully reviewed. Several new plate numbers have been reported and these have now been listed, and many of the notes regarding these have been revised in the light of new information. It was noted in the last edition that perforation errors arising from paper folds were rising in popularity. That trend has continued and has resulted in a number of previously unrecorded examples coming to light. A few new plate varieties have been included, plus new or additional illustrations of existing listings.

It has also been decided to include the Postage Due stamps issued during the Elizabeth II period so that all issues of the reign are included in the volume. These issues have been relatively neglected in recent years, and it is hoped that their inclusion here may lead to an increased interest in these stamps.

The Market

There is evidence that the stamps of Queen Elizabeth II are growing in popularity. This has not affected the market for the basic stamps, of which the large stocks that exist are sufficient to meet the demand.

However, specialised material is in much more limited supply, and prices are beginning to rise. Areas such as the perforation pip blocks are a typical example. For many issues these are not easy to find, and indeed, although all the possible combinations are listed, some may in fact not exist. Obvious examples are the perforation pip blocks of the Navigator stamps, but more seemingly mundane material can also be placed in the rare to virtually impossible category, and prices will rise rapidly if demand increases.

Several plate numbers have appeared on the market recently after having not been seen for many years, and the prices for these have been strong. For those numbers for which more than 3 or 4 examples exist, the market is much less firm, and some rationalization has been made of the prices in this catalogue.

Proof material is probably the weakest area. A large number of sunken die proofs of the Queen Elizabeth II period have reached the market in recent years, and these have struggled to be absorbed at prices approaching the catalogue prices. This material has, in most cases, been lowered in the current catalogue. Other proof material tends to be of great rarity, but is also not experiencing great demand.

The demand for the popular or rare plate varieties has continued, and in general the prices for these is on an upward path. Some of the scarcer plate varieties exist in very limited numbers.

Arthur Gray's major collection of Queen Elizabeth II appeared on the auction market recently. The prices realised indicate that the market for the major rarities remains very strong. There are relatively few missing colour errors in this period, and most are of considerable rarity and sought after not only by Australian Commonwealth collectors but also from general collectors of this material.