

COMMUNICATIONS

POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

New Commissions

Early in 1973, the Postmaster-General announced the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to determine the true functions of the Post Office; how best those functions could be carried out; and the sort of organisation that was necessary to meet the postal and telecommunications needs of the future. The Commission of Inquiry consisted of three commissioners and presented its report to the Governor-General on 19 April 1974; most of its recommendations were accepted by the Commonwealth Government. The Report favoured the establishment of two statutory corporations to administer the postal and telecommunications services. The two corporations would be independent of the Public Service Board on matters of organisation, staff, pay, and conditions of service.

The Report contained more than one hundred principal recommendations and conclusions, and after the Commonwealth Government had considered the broad issues involved, an inter-departmental working group, comprising representatives from the Postmaster-General's Department, the Department of the Special Minister of State, the Treasury, the Public Service Board, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, was set up to study the detailed recommendations, and to report their findings to the Postmaster-General and the Special Minister of State. Other government departments which were affected by the recommendations were also consulted.

The Report of the inter-departmental working group was considered by the Commonwealth Government in February 1975, and some of the more important suggestions subsequently endorsed by it included the following principles. The Commissions were to be financed by Treasury advances subject to interest payment, each to be responsible for financing at least 50 per cent of new capital investment from internal sources. The Commissions were to be free to set tariffs, subject to ministerial approval of tariffs for basic services. Past postal losses were to be written off. The Commissions were to be independent of the Public Service Board and the arbitral authority between the Commissions and their staff was to be the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission; consultative facilities would also be established. Legislation was to be introduced to preserve the rights of existing staff, and to continue the sponsorship of the Australian Postal Institute.

A major factor contributing to the enormity of the legislative task was the sheer size of the department and its place within the Commonwealth Public Service in particular, and in the economy in general. Since the department provided employment for more than 120,000 persons, or about one half of the Commonwealth Public Service, any changes in staffing provisions were bound to have significant repercussions on the remainder of the Commonwealth Public Service, as well as on private employment. The task was further complicated by the need to preserve, for all staff, existing terms and conditions of employment under changed service conditions, and also to incorporate improved staffing provisions, some of which were likely to be implemented in the Commonwealth Public Service in the near future.

The legislation covering the establishment of the new Commissions comprised, initially, three Bills—the Postal Services Bill, the Telecommunications Bill, and the Postal and

Telecommunications Commissions (Transitional Provisions) Bill. On 23 April 1975, these three Bills were introduced into the Senate by the Postmaster-General, and, following debate, were passed by the Senate in May 1975, though with some substantial amendments. The most important of the amendments introduced by the Opposition parties in the Senate was the deletion of the provision for the merging of the functions of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission with those of the new Australian Telecommunications Commission. The Commonwealth Government then introduced a further Bill, the Telecommunications Bill No. 2, on 29 May 1975. This Bill reinstated the provisions which had been deleted from the earlier Telecommunications Bill by the Opposition parties in the Senate, and which related to the incorporation of the Overseas Telecommunications Commission with the national service. Although this fourth Bill was passed in the House of Representatives, it was later defeated in the Senate, with the result that the Overseas Telecommunications Commission remains as a separate organisation.

The Governor-General gave Royal Assent to the Postal Services Act, the Telecommunications Act, and the Postal and Telecommunications (Transitional Provisions) Act on 12 June 1975, and, from midnight on Monday, 30 June 1975, all postal services, and most of the services provided by telecommunications, ceased to operate as the Postmaster-General's Department, but were embodied in two separate Commissions—the Australian Postal Commission and the Australian Telecommunications Commission. Radio licensing and monitoring activities remained as a part of the Postmaster-General's Department.

The Postmaster-General's Department was changed to the Department of Post and Telecommunications late in December 1975.

POSTAL SERVICES IN VICTORIA

Historical outline

Postal services in Victoria were first placed under government control in April 1837. Seventeen years later, in March 1854, Australia's first commercial telegraph service was established between Melbourne and Williamstown, providing a new form of communication that was much more rapid than the pack-horse or mail coach. For fifteen years, until 1869, the electric telegraph was operated as a government department separate from the Post Office, but in that year the two were amalgamated to become the Post and Telegraph Department. This amalgamation of postal and telecommunications services continued through Federation, in 1901, until the two services finally separated on 1 July 1975.

Present activities

On 1 July 1975, a new statutory authority, the Australian Postal Commission, took over the operation and management of Australia's postal services from the Postmaster-General's Department. The Commission, which operates under the trading name Australia Post, was granted considerable flexibility in the management of its own affairs, and significant changes were made in the style of operation, organisation, financing, and in some cases, in the provision of postal services. Despite the greater flexibility, it is still part of the total government services, and as such is subject to many of the constraints applicable to government departments.

At 30 June 1977, Australia Post served 4,434,784 residential and 388,323 business addresses in Australia, as well as the international postal network. In Victoria 1,208,363 householders and 102,082 businesses were served. The network was based on 5,719 post offices throughout Australia of which 1,445 were official offices. In Victoria the respective figures were 1,385 and 335. The transport fleet, covering both urban and rural areas numbered 953 vehicles in Victoria (5,018 Australia).

Distribution of mail

During 1976-77, over 695 million postal articles were handled in Victoria. This large amount of mail was transported by Australia Post's own vehicles, by private services (mail contractors), and by rail, sea, and air transport, at a total cost of \$11.175m. During 1976-77, Australia Post's motor vehicles in Victoria covered a distance of 18.028 million kilometres.

Australia Post has continued to implement its plan for a decentralised mail network throughout Victoria, although no new centres actually opened between 1 July 1976 and 30 June 1977. The master plan for the country areas of Victoria involves a total of five mail centres, of which the Geelong centre, opened in October 1975, serves the south-west region and some South Australian border towns, while the Ballarat centre, opened in May 1976, serves portions of the Mallee and Western Districts, and some South Australian border towns. By 30 June 1977, work was well advanced on a single storey mail centre at Morwell, designed by the Commonwealth Department of Construction to provide a total floor area of 1,223.8 square metres. This centre, when operational, will serve the Gippsland region. Work is also in hand on the remaining two country mail centres required to complete the country network. These are located at Bendigo and Seymour. Like the Morwell centre, both of these buildings have been designed by the Commonwealth Department of Construction, and both will provide a total floor area of 1,223.8 square metres.

The Bendigo centre will serve the north-west region of Victoria and some New South Wales border towns, while the Seymour centre will serve the north and north-eastern country regions, and will forward mail to Albury for delivery in Albury and surrounding areas.

Australia Post continued to rearrange country mail services in line with reductions in rail services. This has been achieved by extensions of road services, both by Australia Post's own fleet of vehicles, and by contractors, over many routes previously serviced by rail. These moves were designed to maintain overall network standards.

During the latter half of 1976-77, an important innovation was made in relation to the project "Service Improvement", introduced by Australia Post in the previous year. This was the replacement of "Times of Clearance" on street posting boxes by a notice showing the latest time to post mail for earliest delivery—locally, elsewhere in the State, or inter-State. Where possible, this indicates when delivery may be expected. In Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, the latest evening posting times at street letter boxes to connect with mail deliveries the next day in the same metropolitan area, range from 6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Posting boxes at larger post offices in the metropolitan area are cleared between 8.00 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. The final evening clearance of posting boxes at the GPO is about three hours later. Although the times vary in other capital cities, they follow a similar pattern.

During the year, two non-official post offices in Victoria were raised to official status. These were located in the Melbourne metropolitan area at Mulgrave North and Forest Hill Centre.

Mail volumes, which fell approximately 12 per cent in 1975-76 following the increase in the basic postage rate to 18 cents from 1 September 1975, stabilised throughout Australia in 1976-77. From September 1976 to June 1977, standard letters gradually established a growth rate which was approaching 2 per cent by the end of the year. The competitive segments of the mail, such as parcels and non-standard articles, also showed improvements over this period. Following the successful implementation of the overnight parcels service, domestic parcels business increased by more than 10 per cent over the year.

Customer relations

Australia Post's programme of strengthening relationships with customers is being continuously developed. It includes improvement of service standards, training of counter staff, and adequate communication with customers. Project "Get The Business", which was introduced in October 1976, falls into the last category and involves an extensive sales campaign to ensure that the business community is made aware of the postal services available. The first six weeks of this campaign produced gratifying results. A number of specially trained business advisers, assisted by postmasters and other staff, visited no less than 18,000 business houses and brought in new business estimated to be worth \$4m a year.

Marketing initiatives

Australia Post again offered a special rate of 15 cents for standard size 1976 Christmas cards posted in November and December to Australian addresses. In November 1976, the

local rate of postage was extended to include householder postings, making it possible to post a standard article for as little as 3 cents per article. On 1 January 1977, considerably lower rates were introduced for overseas air parcels over 2.5 kilograms. It is expected that this initiative will win a substantial share of this market for Australia Post.

New stamp issues

The following new stamps were issued by Australia Post during 1976-77: Montreal Olympics, issued 14 July 1976; Australian Scenes, issued 25 August 1976; National Stamp Week, issued 27 September 1976; Christmas 1976, issued 1 November 1976; Famous Australians, issued 10 November 1976; Performing Arts, issued 19 January 1977; Silver Jubilee of Elizabeth II, issued 2 February 1977; Test Cricket Centenary, issued 9 March 1977; 50th Anniversary of Parliament House, Canberra, issued 13 April 1977; and 50th Anniversary of ACTU, issued 9 May 1977.

Stamp packs and first day covers

Growing interest in collecting souvenir stamp packs and first day covers has contributed to an increase in the sale of these items in recent years. In 1975-76, the number of stamp packs sold was 678,925 and the number of first day issues sold was 804,811. In 1976-77, the number of stamp packs sold had increased to 1,236,016 and the number of first day covers sold had increased to 1,233,484.

Further references: *History of the Post Office in Victoria, Victorian Year Book 1961*, pp. 702-5; *Postage stamps of Victoria, 1974*, pp. 799-802; *Post Office Museum, 1975*, p. 693; *New developments of Australia Post, 1978*, pp. 602-3; *Postage stamp issues, 1978*, pp. 603-4

TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES IN VICTORIA

Introduction

Telecom Australia (the Australian Telecommunications Commission) was established under the *Telecommunications Act 1975*, to take over the responsibility for telecommunications services which had been vested in the Postmaster-General's Department since Federation.

The Commission which took over its responsibilities on 1 July 1975 reports to the Minister for Post and Telecommunications who is supported by a Department of State—the Postal and Telecommunications Department.

The responsibilities placed upon Telecom Australia by the *Telecommunications Act 1975* are summarised in the Commission's Charter which states:

- (1) Telecom Australia is responsible to provide, maintain, and operate telecommunication services in Australia which best meet the social, industrial, and commercial needs of the people of Australia and to make its services available throughout the country so far as is reasonably practicable;
- (2) revenue must cover current expenses each year and provide no less than one half of capital requirements; and
- (3) services are to be kept up to date and operated efficiently and economically with charges as low as practicable.

Telecom Australia organisation

The Commission

The Act provides that the Commission shall consist of seven Commissioners, of whom one is the Managing Director. The Commissioners are appointed by the Commonwealth Government.

National, State, and district structure

Telecom national headquarters is located in Melbourne. All State Managers are responsible to the Chief General Manager, who in turn is responsible to the Managing Director.

The formulation of corporate policies and objectives is the responsibility of the national headquarters. The translation of these policies and objectives into operational fact is the responsibility of the State administrations. The Victorian State Administration which employs some 22,000 persons has an Operations Department with approximately 60 per cent of the total staff, four functional Departments, and two other branches.

The Operations Department has the major role of dealing with customers, installing and maintaining telecommunications equipment, and operating the telecommunications system. The Operations Department is organised on a geographical basis with a District Telecommunications Manager in charge of each District. There are 20 Districts with Head Offices at Ararat, Ballarat, Benalla, Bendigo, Camberwell, Cheltenham, City, Clayton, Coburg, Croydon, Dandenong, Footscray, Frankston, Geelong, Hamilton, Ivanhoe, Mildura, Ringwood, Sale, and Shepparton.

The responsibilities of the functional organisational units which support the State Manager and the Operations Department are: Engineering, Customer Services, Finance and Accounting, Personnel and Industrial Relations Departments, and the Supply and Information Systems Branches. During 1977-78, material worth \$110m was issued from Main Store. Approximately 90 per cent was made in Australia. The Information Systems Branch is a growing unit with a wide range of modern data processing equipment. The computer installation at Clayton has a value of \$7m and, together with a similar installation in Sydney, serves all States. Further details of these functional units can be found on pages 604-5 of the *Victorian Year Book* 1978.

Corporate Plan

In December 1977, Telecom produced a Corporate Plan to cover the years 1977-78 to 1986-87. The four main thrusts of the Plan are in the areas of quality of service, efficiency, staff relations and development, and technological improvement. Specific corporate actions have been developed in each of these areas.

Telecommunications network

The present system comprises networks of individual subscribers' lines connected mainly to automatic exchanges, the exchanges being inter-connected by common-user circuits known as junctions or trunks. All new exchanges under construction at present are now of the crossbar or electronic type employing a common control method of connection.

Each telephone subscriber in a particular community is connected to a terminal exchange. Terminal exchanges are grouped into zones for charging purposes. Melbourne has a network of more than one hundred automatic local exchanges.

In 1977, Telecom embarked on a modernisation programme which applies processors using computer techniques to control switching operations in local telephone exchanges. There are two phases. One is to add processor controls to the current crossbar exchange equipment. The other is to introduce a new generation of electronic exchanges. The modernisation programme will be an important factor in containing cost increases (and thus prices to the customer) in the years ahead. It will also pave the way for new facilities, such as abbreviated dialling and automatic reminder calls.

The Melbourne local call area covers some 4,170 square kilometres and is one of the largest in the world. New York's is 650 square kilometres and London's 3,300 square kilometres.

In the trunk network, automatic operation, by which subscribers dial their own trunk calls without the intervention of an operator, is being extended. In the year ended June 1978, over 92 per cent of all trunk calls in Victoria were subscriber dialled. Under this system of subscriber trunk dialling (STD) the charges for trunk calls are registered on the same subscriber's meter as the local calls, the difference being that while each local call results in one single meter registration, trunk calls cause consecutive registration; the number of registrations depending on the time that the call lasts, the distance over which it is made, and the time of day.

During 1977-78, the capital investment in Victoria was \$228m of which \$88m was spent on the local network and \$15m on the trunk network. Other major areas of expenditure were customer equipment \$86m and buildings \$15m.

Telecommunication facilities

In addition to local, trunk, and STD calls, the network provides international subscriber dialling (ISD) for those who request it. At 30 June 1978, there were 120 exchanges equipped to provide this facility, 41 of which were outside the metropolitan area. Each telephone with the ISD facility can call any of 302,000,000 telephone services in a total of 71 countries. New countries are being linked progressively to the ISD network.

Telecom is also responsible for the provision of telex service, data transmission facilities, and private lines, the demand for which is growing at a faster rate than for telephone facilities.

Further references: Melbourne—Sydney co-axial cable, *Victorian Year Book* 1964, pp. 848-50; Overseas telecommunications services, 1977, pp. 698-700, 1978 pp. 604-6

COMMUNICATIONS STATISTICS

General

Particulars concerning the revenue and expenditure in Victoria of the Australian Postal and Telecommunications Commissions for the year 1976-77 are shown in the following tables:

VICTORIA—AUSTRALIAN POSTAL COMMISSION:
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE, 1976-77
(\$'000)

Revenue		Expenditure	
Mail services	122,000	Operating and general	100,500
Money and postal order services	1,400	Transportation	11,200
Commission or agency services	21,500	Superannuation	13,500
Other	3,400	Other	7,600
Total	148,300	Total	132,800

VICTORIA—AUSTRALIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION:
REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE, 1976-77
(\$'000)

Revenue		Expenditure	
Telephone	417,632	Salaries and wages	217,073
Telegraph	13,433	Material	80,649
Proceeds of sales	3,419	Building	14,046
Other	5,422	Other	50,627
Total	439,906	Total	362,395

At 30 June 1977, the Australian Telecommunications Commission employed 22,482 persons in Victoria, including 21,985 full-time staff. On the same date the Australian Postal Commission employed a total of 11,056 persons in Victoria, 9,548 of whom were full-time staff.

VICTORIA—TELEPHONE SERVICES AT 30 JUNE

Particulars	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Telephone exchanges	1,229	1,071	1,180	1,179	1,158
Public telephones	7,635	7,662	7,800	7,779	7,928
Services in operation	948,344	1,011,355	1,061,965	1,105,248	1,158,306
Instruments connected	1,370,163	1,485,140	1,544,098	1,598,447	1,701,769
Instruments per 1,000 of population	380.6	410.6	423.0	431.0	452.0

VICTORIA—LETTERS, ETC., POSTED AND RECEIVED
('000)

Period	Letters, postcards, etc.	Registered articles (except parcels)	Newspapers and packets	Parcels (including those registered)
POSTED FOR DELIVERY WITHIN AUSTRALIA				
1972-73	646,581	1,724	91,676	5,970
1973-74	649,157	1,510	84,811	6,488
1974-75	596,148	1,556	102,910	5,574
1975-76	520,184	971	80,564	4,107
1976-77	519,142	862	83,590	4,766

VICTORIA—LETTERS, ETC., POSTED AND RECEIVED—*continued*
(*000)

Period	Letters, postcards, etc.	Registered articles (except parcels)	Newspapers and packets	Parcels (including those registered)
DISPATCHED TO AND RECEIVED FROM PLACES OVERSEAS				
1972-73	80,198	1,301	9,218	950
1973-74	80,345	1,479	12,845	1,040
1974-75	79,423	1,507	15,027	1,142
1975-76	76,408	1,294	13,298	1,123
1976-77	78,683	1,234	13,742	1,129
TOTAL POSTED IN VICTORIA AND RECEIVED FROM OVERSEAS				
1972-73	726,779	3,025	100,894	6,920
1973-74	729,502	2,990	97,656	7,528
1974-75	675,571	3,064	117,938	6,716
1975-76	596,592	2,265	93,862	5,230
1976-77	597,825	2,096	97,332	5,895

VICTORIA—RADIO COMMUNICATION STATIONS AUTHORISED AT 30 JUNE

Class of station	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Transmitting and receiving—					
Fixed stations (a)—					
Aeronautical	—	—	—	—	—
Services with other countries	—	—	—	—	—
Other	345	366	379	412	438
Land stations (b)—					
Aeronautical	70	72	94	92	100
Base stations—					
Land mobile services	3,280	3,535	3,774	4,038	4,192
Harbour mobile services	47	77	88	104	115
Coast (c)					
Limited coast	44	44	47	57	58
Repeater	41	41	42	43	43
Special experimental	136	140	130	149	443
Mobile stations (d)—					
Aeronautical	590	651	666	695	667
Citizens—					
HF	—	—	—	—	46,488
UHF	—	—	—	—	—
Land mobile services	34,843	42,144	46,230	49,263	50,977
Harbour mobile services	351	622	985	1,418	1,775
Radiodetermination	9	12	7	8	8
Radiotelephone subscribers' service	93	93	94	94	93
Ships	1,460	1,501	1,463	1,449	1,408
Space services (e)	1	2	2	2	2
Amateur stations	2,054	2,140	2,135	2,314	2,615
Total transmitting and receiving	43,365	51,441	56,137	60,139	109,423
Receiving only—					
Fixed stations (a)					
Mobile stations (d)	21	24	7	7	48
Grand total	43,399	51,478	56,151	60,155	109,481

(a) Stations established at fixed locations for communication with other stations similarly established.

(b) Stations established at fixed locations for communication with mobile stations.

(c) Land stations for communication with ocean-going vessels.

(d) Equipment in motor vehicles and harbour vessels.

(e) A radio communication service between earth and/or space stations.

Broadcast and television licences in effect

There were 22 commercial broadcasting stations and nine commercial television stations with licences in Victoria at 30 June 1977. In addition there were eight broadcasting stations operated by the national broadcasting service and eight television stations operated by the national television service.

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