



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Australia Post**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 2 December 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** King, Catherine, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
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Ms **KING** (Ballarat) (12:52): I move:

That this House:

(1) notes that:

(a) Australia Post as per its Community Service Obligations, is required to achieve timely mail deliveries in all parts of Australia, not just the major capital cities;

(b) residents in regional towns and cities across Australia are not receiving mail for up to six days, with mail routes routinely left unprocessed due to insufficient staff at regional mail centres; and

(c) constituents have contacted the offices of regional Members, citing regular occurrences of late mail affecting people who depend on reliable mail services; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Communications to:

(a) ensure that the current cuts by attrition at regional mail centres are reversed, suspending moves by Australia Post and the Government to abandon regional Australia by transferring mail sorting services to capital cities;

(b) restore next day delivery services from regional centres; and

(c) ensure the security of jobs and safe working conditions for regional postal workers.

I want to highlight what is happening within Australia Post, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales at the moment, and some of the impact that that is having on regional communities such as the one I represent in the federal seat of Ballarat. Plans have been announced internally by Australia Post that they are to cut next-day delivery service for regional centres. That is leading to delays in the critical delivery of post within my own electorate but reports are coming in from other areas that that is the case as well. In a number of instances being reported in some of the smaller towns across my district it is taking up to six to seven days for them to receive their mail. That is not the service that they have been used to.

This is of deep concern to those of us who live in regional Australia, with Australia Post's decisions impacting directly on the services within my community. Australians should not be treated differently because they live outside metropolitan areas in regional centres nor should they be treated differently if they live in more isolated communities, particularly in some of our more dispersed states. I fear that what we are seeing, unfortunately, from Australia Post is just the tip of the iceberg for our communities.

There is no more important obligation for a national mail service than to ensure it supports and properly services those people in the more isolated and geographically disadvantaged regions of our nation. Regional residents should not lose a national service that the rest of Australia receives. There are many residents who are reporting, as I said, that they are waiting up to six days for their mail.

The Communication Workers Union have written to me about their experiences of what is happening with staff within regional distribution centres. The decision by Australia Post, in essence, to close, almost, but certainly to see a substantial reduction in staff at, the regional distribution centre in Ballarat and have mail, instead of being sorted in Ballarat, done in Dandenong, several kilometres away, and then shipped back to Ballarat—including mail that needs to go to Melbourne—is causing significant delays. That is affecting residents in Morwell, Bendigo, Seymour and Geelong. In New South Wales, the impact is being felt in Tamworth, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga and Albury, and they are certainly being affected by the move away from next-day delivery.

I have received emails from our local U3A who, for 30 years, have been relying on the Australia Post service and are concerned about what has happened to their mail service. Individuals involved in U3A have found that their mail is not getting through, and that invitations to events are arriving after the event has occurred—and, unfortunately, in my own office, that is exactly the experience that I am having. In the 12 years since I became the member, that has not been the case; Australia Post has always delivered excellent service. But the latest instance was that an invitation to the birthday party of a good friend, a member of the Australian Labor Party who is incredibly unwell, was received in my office two days after the event occurred, despite it being posted seven days previously.

We have also had representations from constituents who have a particular arrangement with their pharmacist and their prescribing doctor to receive their prescriptions by mail. For example, a prescription that was franked and stamped at the time that it was dispatched from the GP's surgery on its very short journey to the patient, only a kilometre away, was received seven days later.

As to what is happening in Australia Post at the moment: I understand the cost pressures that they are under; I also understand the growth in parcel delivery, and what is happening in that side of the business. But the core business of Australia Post is to deliver mail. There are many older people who do not use the internet and email and so rely on a mail service. The fact that Australia Post, at the moment, in many of our regions, thinks that it can deliver a service while slowly closing regional distribution centres, by walking away from next-day delivery, really is incredibly concerning. They need to look at what their delivery mechanisms are and why they are not able to meet the next-day delivery standards within regional communities. I certainly hope that the Minister for Communications, who I know does care deeply about the delivery in regional communities—at least, I hope very much that he does—has a good look at what is happening in Australia Post at the moment. I call on him to reverse what has occurred in the regional communities, certainly in Ballarat, and I know the member for Bendigo will be speaking on a similar matter.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER ( Mr Mitchell ): I thank the member for Ballarat. Is the motion seconded?

**Ms Chesters:** I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I thank the member for Bendigo.