



Postcard c1910. Post office, Launceston, Tasmania, built in 1899.

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY,
LAUNCESTON

CHAPTER 34

POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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POSTAL SERVICES

THE POST OFFICE, or Australia Post as it is now called, is Australia's oldest commercial organisation. Its origins are in the appointment in 1809 of a former convict, Isaac Nichols, as postmaster with authority to accept incoming mail from ships arriving in Sydney. For much of its history, the post office has been responsible for a great variety of services including, besides inward and outward mail distributions, such diverse functions as agency operations for the Commonwealth Savings Bank, distribution of electoral enrolment and taxation forms, payment of social service benefits of different kinds, money order services, and telegraph and telephone services. From Federation until 1975 the Australian Post Office was responsible to a minister of the crown known as the postmaster-general, whose incumbents have included famous politicians such as Sir James Forrest. From 1975 until 1980 these operations were the responsibility of the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, and from November 1980 of the Minister for Communications.

In July 1975 the activities of Australian post offices were split between Australia Post, operated by the Australian Postal Commission, and Telecom, operated by the Australian Telecommunications Commission. Both commissions were responsible to the Minister for Posts and Telecommunications until November 1980 and then to the Minister for Communications. Because so many of the early telecommunications functions were associated with postal services, the first part of the following bibliography contains references to post office history before 1975, where they cover telecommunications topics.

Australia Post employs, through its state administrations, historians and archivists whose work involves co-ordinating and consolidating accounts of early post offices. Nevertheless, there is a surprising paucity of publications covering the development of postal services in Australia; for the country as a whole, there is no general history of postal services, official or otherwise. Much of the history of postal services, telephony and telegraphy is in privately published monographs written by enthusiasts and produced by post office and telecommunications societies in various states. Their content ranges from histories of stamps and postmarks to detailed histories of offices in particular locations or services in a particular region.

Some impressive examples of state-oriented histories are E. Williams and P. Collas (1977)—178 pages of roneoed typescript published by the Society of Australasian Specialists (a group of New York based stamp collectors)—and the history of postal services in Tasmania

(1975). The Post Office Historical Society of Brisbane has published *Submarine cables in Australia*, and many state historical societies, the Telecommunication Society of Australia, the Institute of Radio, Electrical and Electronic Engineers and the royal societies in each state have both highly specialised and general historical studies recorded in their proceedings.

A history of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union by F. Waters (1978) is possibly the only single reference, outside official sources, to the development of Australian postal services in the twentieth century. The book's coverage of this subject is, of course, incidental because its main purpose is to describe the union's history and the industrial relations policies of the Postmaster-General's Department.

The incidental treatment of postal history is also a feature of most philatelic books published in Australia. In addition to their interest in the production of postage stamps, philatelic authors in recent years have paid a good deal of attention to the postmarks and special handling markings applied to mail at post offices. Those philatelic books that cover aspects of postal services development to a reasonable extent are included in the bibliography.

The annual reports of government authorities such as the Australian Postal Commission, Telecom Australia and the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal offer the latest statistical information and describe new developments, as does the annual report of Aussat Pty Ltd, which operates Australia's National Satellite System. Similarly the annual reports of superseded authorities such as the Superintendents of Telegraphs in all states and of the Postmaster-General's Department are important, given the absence of any comprehensive co-ordinating publication.

The reports of commissions and committees of inquiry into the post offices, from both the colonial and the federal eras, together with those of the Committee of Review of the ABC (the Dix Report) and the Committee of Inquiry into Telecommunications Services in Australia (the Davidson Report) contain a great deal of information in appendices and specialist submissions on the administrative, technical and general problems that beset such large public enterprises. The Australian periodical literature too is rich in relatively short but detailed accounts of services, procedures and equipment.

The Australian Archives office in each state capital contains records of the respective state administrations of the Postmaster-General's Department; records of the federal headquarters of the department are in the Melbourne office of the Australian Archives. Historical research officers employed by the department and Australia Post have produced a number of small publications usually dealing with the history of postal services in a township or local region.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunication is a fairly new word, originating in 1932 according to the *Shorter Oxford English dictionary*, and literary dictionaries define it broadly as communications over long distances by electrical or electromagnetic means. Technical dictionaries and reference works extend it to include telegraphy, telephony, facsimile data transmission, television, broadcasting, telemetry, satellite position fixing, direction measurement and radar. This topic therefore overlaps with parts of chapter 55 of this volume; the references listed below emphasise the technology rather than the social impact of the theme.

Much of the literature of Australian telecommunications is widely dispersed in periodical articles, special reports, aspects of government inquiries and submissions to them rather than in conveniently accessible monographs. Archival materials are scattered through the records of federal and state governments and private and public companies. The records of Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd, Siemens Ltd, Cable and Wireless Ltd, L.M. Ericsson Pty Ltd, all contain data relevant to the technology, as developed and applied in Australia, of radio, television, telephony and submarine cable installation. Amalgamated Wireless since 1913 has been involved in most applications of radio communication from the manufacture of a wide range of radio receivers and transmitters to the management of commercial broadcasting; it was the authority controlling Overseas Telecommunications Ltd before it became a government organisation. AWA has begun a company history but it is not expected to be published for several years. The

company has deposited much of its archival material with the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

Government authorities such as CSIRO for radiophysics, Telecom for almost all aspects of telecommunications, Australia Post and Overseas Telecommunications Ltd all hold materials additional to those transferred to the Australian Archives. The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal in both Melbourne and Sydney holds complete sets of the submissions to hearings for the granting of licences and licence renewals, together with full transcripts of proceedings at all hearings throughout Australia. The tribunal has also produced, through its Research and Information Section, important studies on the ratings of television programs.

The official state yearbooks all include sections on communications which, over several years, comprise a concentrated history of the development of services; occasionally they contain 'special articles' offering a historical review of particular fields. The *Victorian year books* of 1975 and 1976 have a special review and article on telecommunications. The *Year book of Australia* gives similar treatments, the most comprehensive so far being in issue 59 of 1973, entitled 'The development of communications in Australia'. It provides descriptive and statistical information on telegraph, telephone, broadcasting and television services.

GENERAL WORKS

ANDERSON, R.M.M. *Report on the business management of the Postmaster-General's Department of the Commonwealth of Australia*. Melbourne, Government Printer, 1915. 41 p.

This inquiry considered the need for business methods in managing the post office, following the 1908–10 royal commission.

AUSTRALIA. Ad Hoc Committee of Enquiry into the Commercial Accounts of the Post Office. *Report ...* Canberra, 1961. 1 vol (various pagings).

This committee considered the net financial advantage which had accrued to the Australian Post Office, 'regarded as a business undertaking', up to 30 June 1959. Chairman: Sir Alexander Fitzgerald.

AUSTRALIA. Australian Post Office Commission of Inquiry. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Australian Post Office*. AGPS, 1974. 2 vols. (Australia. Parliament. Parliamentary papers nos 123, 124 of 1974.)

The commission recommended changes in postal and telecommunications services, including the division between Overseas Telecommunications Commission and Postmaster-General's Department. Chairman: Sir J. Vernon.

AUSTRALIA. Committee of Inquiry into the Monopoly Position of the Australian Postal Commission. *Report ...*, AGPS, 1982. 213 p, map.

The inquiry was to 'examine and report on the appropriateness of the statutory functions and duties of the Australian Postal Commission and the scope for reducing or eliminating the exclusive power of the Commission to carry letters for reward'. Chairman: A.E. Bradley.

AUSTRALIA. Royal Commission on Postal Services. *Report ...* Melbourne, Government Printer, 1910. 210 p.

Considered all the 'postal, telegraphic and telephone services of the Commonwealth' and recommended that 'every effort should be made to conduct the services on business lines'. Chairman: J.H. Cook.

AUSTRALIAN POSTAL COMMISSION. *Annual report 1976-* . Canberra, The Commission.

The official statistical account of achievements and activities of the Australian Postal Commission. *Reports* for 1911–75 were published by the Postmaster-General's Department.

WATERS, F. *Postal unions and politics: a history of the Amalgamated Postal Workers Union of Australia*. Ed by D.J. Murphy. UQP, 1978. 311 p, illus.

An account by an official of the personalities of the union now called the Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union and the PMG Dept's management.

HISTORY AND PHILATELY

AUSTRALIA. Postmaster-General's Dept. *The Australian Post Office: a brief history, 1809–1975*. Melbourne, Australian Post Office, 1975. 34 p, illus.

Briefly covers developments in the pre-federation colonies through federal government authority of telegraph, telephone, radio and postal services.

AUSTRALIA. Postmaster-General's Dept. *Centenary of the Brisbane General Post Office*. Brisbane, The Department, 1972. 42 p, illus.

Deals with the construction and architecture of the buildings that served as Brisbane's GPO and a description of types of mail transport, the staff and mail sorting activities.

AUSTRALIA. Postmaster-General's Dept. *A history of the post office in Tasmania*. Hobart, Australian Post Office, 1975. 72 p, illus, maps.

Development of postal services in Tas to 1975. Includes employment, post office personalities, mail routes and mail transport from horseback to aeroplane.

CAMPBELL, H.M. *Queensland cancellations and other postal markings 1860–1913*. Melbourne, Royal Philatelic Society of Vic, 1977. 156 p, illus.

Emphasis on postmarks in use in Qld; covers also the carriage of mail by the railways and in a peripheral manner the development of postal services generally.

CAMPBELL, H.M. *et al, Tasmania: the postal history and postal markings*. Melbourne, Royal Philatelic Society of Vic, 1962. 203 p, illus.

Deals with the postmarks on Tasmanian mails. Description of new post offices, prisoners' mail and travelling post offices. See also Ingles (1975).

EUSTIS, H.N. ed, *The Australian air mail catalogue*. Adelaide, Hobby Investments, 1984. 230 p, illus.

A descriptive listing of philatelic mail carried on inaugural or significant air services, and some coverage of air mail facilities. First published in 1976.

GIBBS, C. *History of postal services in Victoria*. Melbourne, Australia Post, 1984. 125 p, illus, maps.

Traces the history of postal services in Vic since 1837.

HOUISON, A. *History of the post office: together with an historical*

account of the issue of postage stamps in New South Wales. Sydney, Government Printer, 1890. 110 p, illus.

Covers the main postal developments in NSW up to 1890; the bulk of the work describes the stamps issued by the NSW Post Office. Facsimile edition, Sydney, View Publications, 1983.

INGLES, O.G. *et al*, *Tasmania: the postal history and postal markings, part 2*. Melbourne, Hawthorn for the Royal Philatelic Society of Vic, 1975. 189 p, illus, maps.

Companion volume to H.M. Campbell (1962).

PURVES, JR.W. *The postal history of the Port Phillip district 1835–1851*. Melbourne, Royal Philatelic Society of Vic, 1950. 68 p, illus, map.

Development of mail services, growth of post offices, postage rates, ships' mails, and listing of postmarks in use.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA STUDY GROUP. *Western Australia, the stamps and postal history: a guide to its philately*. Ed by M. Hamilton. Perth, WA Study Group, 1979. 471 p, illus, maps.

Postal developments in WA although primarily before World War I when distinctive stamps were issued.

WILLIAMS, E. AND COLLAS, P. *Northern Territory: a postal history 1824–1975*. San Diego, California, Society of Australasian Specialists, 1977. 178 p, illus.

Offers a historical overview, including the establishment of post offices in the NT, the Overland Telegraph Line and mail by railway and aeroplane.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

ALLEN, Y. AND SPENCER, S. *The broadcasting chronology, 1809–1980*. Sydney, Australian Film and Television School, 1983. 221 p.

Historic events and reference material in telecommunications and broadcasting arranged chronologically.

ATR: *Australian telecommunication research J*. Melbourne, Telecommunication Society of Australia, 1967–

Research papers concerned with development of equipment and testing of materials.

AUSTRALIA. Committee of Inquiry into Telecommunications Services in Australia. *Report . . .* AGPS, 1982. 3 vols, illus.

Presents operational policies, organisational arrangements, planning of the Australian Telecommunications Commission, and the involvement of private industry. Chairman: J.A. Davidson.

AUSTRALIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. Engineering Training Group. *Engineer development programme: introductory series: an engineer's introduction to Telecom technology*. Comp by D.H. Johns. Melbourne, [Telecom] Engineering Training Group, 1981. 285 p, illus.

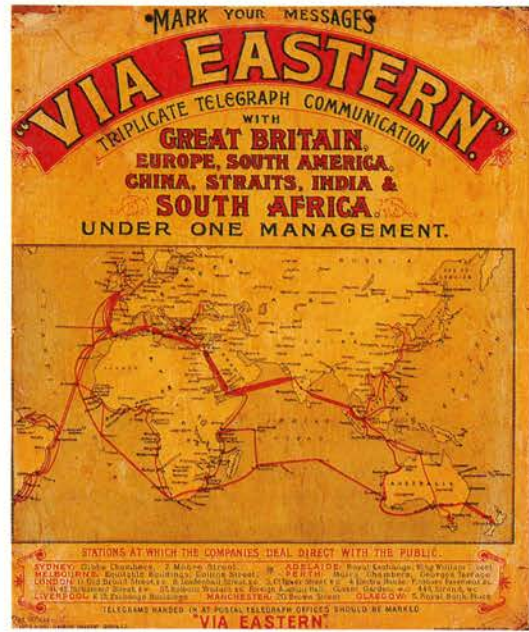
Technology of telegraph, data transmission, broadcast and power supply systems at an introductory level for graduate engineers.

AUSTRALIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. Engineering Training HQ. *An introduction to equipment for non-technical personnel*. Melbourne, [Telecom] Engineering Training HQ, 1979[?]. 91 p, illus.

Describes current telephony, lines and cables and associated equipment and appropriate elementary electrical theory of operations.

AUSTRALIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. National Telecommunications Planning Branch. *Telecom 2000: an exploration of the long-term development of telecommunications in Australia*. Melbourne, Government Printer, 1975. 166 p, illus.

Possible directions in Australia's social economic and technologi-



'Telegraph communication via Eastern.' Pamphlet, c1930. On 8 April 1927 the first public overseas radio-telegraph service opened between Australia and England. In June 1928 a similar service opened between Australia and Montreal, Canada.

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cal future, and likely trends in demand for telecommunications facilities in the early 21st century.

AUSTRALIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION. National Telecommunications Planning Branch. *Outcomes from the Telecom 2000 report, July 1978*. Melbourne, Telecom Australia, 1978. 70 p, illus.

Analyses response to the predictions, proposals and decisions of Telecom 2000 and describes Telecom's current technology.

AUSTRALIAN video and communications. Melbourne, General Magazine Company, 1981–

Reviews home video recording TV equipment and programs with explanatory articles on systems and equipment at general interest level.

BAKER, D. 'From coo-ee to communications satellite', in *A century of scientific progress: the centenary volume of the Royal Society of New South Wales*. Sydney, Royal Society of NSW, 1968, 173–99.

Includes information on specialised aspects absent from other references. Despite title it does not cover satellite communications.

COMMUNICATIONS Australia. Sydney, Thomson Publications, 1982–

Covers communications technology, the administration of telecommunications and commercial aspects.

HALL, E.R. *A saga of achievement: a story of the men and women who maintained and operated radio and radar systems of the RAAF over 50 years*. Melbourne, Bonall, 1978. 334 p, illus. An account of RAAF communications systems, equipment and training from 1961 to 1966.

MOYAL, A.M. *Clear across Australia: a history of telecommunications since 1788*. Melbourne, Nelson, 1984. 437 p, illus, maps.

A lucid and critical story of telecommunications in Australia.

MUSCIO, W.T. *Australian radio: the technical story, 1923-1983*. Sydney, Kangaroo, 1984. 243 p, illus.

Details of the changing components, circuitry and performance of broadcasting transmitters and receivers, radio communication systems, record players and magnetic tape equipment used during the period.

ROSS, J.F. *History of radio in South Australia, 1897-1977*. Sydney, J.F. Ross, 1978. 271 p, illus.

Covers the applications of radio transmission, from telegraphy to commercial broadcasting, services to shipping, aeradio, flying doctor services and early satellite communication at Ceduna.

SANDERCOCK, C.E. *Submarine cables in Australia*. Brisbane, Post Office Historical Society, Australian Postal Institute Qld Division, 1954. 14 p.

Development of cable manufacture and operation with reference to location and laying of overseas and 'internal' submarine cables up to 1954. Refers also to the histories of the cable companies Siemens, Marconi and S.T.C.

TELECOMMUNICATION journal of Australia. Melbourne, Telecommunication Society of Australia, 1935/7-.

Covers developments in telecommunications, broadcasting and TV services. Regularly describes armed services telecommunications systems.

TELEGRAPHY

CLUNE, F. *Overland telegraph: the story of a great Australian achievement and the link between Adelaide and Port Darwin*. A & R, 1955. 238 p, illus, maps.

Relates construction and use of the line to the exploration and social development of the territories it crossed.

GRIBBLE, P.J. *What hath God wrought: the story of the electric telegraph, Queensland*. Brisbane, Telecom Australia, 1981. 1 vol (various pagings), illus.

Every phase of development of the Qld telegraph service from 1861 to 1964.

HARRISON, J.C. *Ninety years of telegraph progress*. Melbourne, The Author, 1945. 101 p, illus.

Australia-wide development, 1854-1944. Accounts of recruitment, training and duties of staff and equipment.

TAYLOR, P. *An end to silence: the building of the overland telegraph line from Adelaide to Darwin*. Sydney, Methuen, 1980. 192 p, illus, maps.

Describes hardships suffered and technical methods used in constructing the line from 1870 to 1872.

TELEPHONY

BATEMAN, J. *History of the telephone in New South Wales*. Sydney, The Author, 1980. 122 p, illus.

Telephones, switchboards and exchanges from earliest Australian installations until mid-1970s. Virtually a catalogue of equipment.

REINECKE, I. AND SCHULTZ, J. *The phone book: the future of Australia's communications on the line*. Ringwood, Vic, Penguin, 1983. 270 p.

Political and industrial influences on the development of services in Telecom are discussed as expressed in the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Telecommunications Services in Australia, 1982.

SODEN, F.A. *et al*, *100 years of the telephone 1876-1976*. Sydney, Australian Historic Telephone Society, 1976. 63 p, illus.

A history of the telephone and associated equipment for the

non-technical reader. Telephone service in Melbourne and Vic is covered with illustrations of early instruments.

SATELLITE COMMUNICATION

AUSSAT PTY LTD. *AUSSAT: Australia's national satellite system: an executive overview*. Sydney, Aussat Pty Ltd, 1983. 47 p, illus.

Describes the space and earth components of the system, its technical specifications and the business outlook and major users.

AUSSAT: newsletter of the Australian Satellite Users Association. Sydney, Aussat, 1981-

Applications of an Australian satellite with descriptions of equipment and projects.

AUSTRALIA. National Communication Satellite System Task Force. *National communications satellite system: report, July 1978*. AGPS, 1978. (Australia Parliament. Parliamentary paper no 317 of 1978).

Inquires into all aspects of a national communication satellite system for Australia.

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE CONFERENCE, Perth, 1979. *Papers and proceedings of the Australian Communications Satellite Conference held December 4-6, 1979 at the University of Western Australia ...*, Ed by C. Deacon. Perth, University Extension, University of Western Australia, 1980. 551 p, illus, maps.

A discussion of the 'promise and perils' of applying communications satellites. The technology and the social effects are considered.



Advertisement for Standard Telephones and Cables in the Bulletin, 3 Sept 1985. With the launch in 1985 of Australia's domestic satellite system, AUSSAT, STC proudly announced that it was 'the first Australian company into space'.