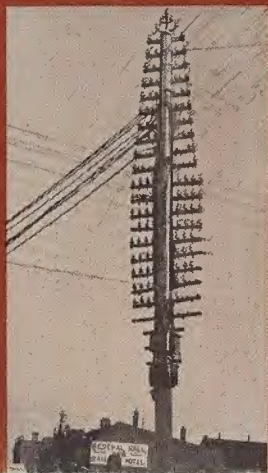




# HISTORY AT A GLANCE



## The Australian Post Office



## The Australian Post Office

The Postmaster-General's Department (Australian Post Office) was founded in Australia on 25 April 1809, with the appointment of Isaac Nichols to take charge of incoming shipments at Sydney in the colony of New South Wales. Nichols later became recognised as Australia's first postmaster.

By 1837, each of the Australian colonies had their own postal services. In later years these were extended to handle telegraph and telephone services. On 1 March 1901, following the Federation of the Colonies, all postal and telecommunication services were taken over by the Commonwealth, under the control of the Federal Postmaster-General.

Since then, the Australian Post Office has been responsible for the control and operation of postal, telegraph and telephone services throughout Australia. Today, it is Australia's largest business organization.

The Department is also responsible for the installation and operation of the transmitters and relaying facilities required for the transmission of broadcasting and television services by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. It co-operates with the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia) in providing facilities for telecommunications with overseas countries.

Australia is an island continent of 2,974,581 square miles with a coastline of 12,210 miles. It is a land of geographic and climatic contrasts where more than fifty-six per cent of the population lives in the six capital cities, which are from 400 to almost 3,000 miles apart. Over vast areas of the semi-arid or desert inland, the population is sparse, and settlements are widely scattered. The Australian Post Office has the challenging task of providing rapid and reliable communications under these conditions.

## Facts at a glance

Assets exceed.....	\$2,280,000,000
Post Offices.....	8,450
Telephone Exchanges.....	6,350
Telephone Subscriber Services.....	2,350,000
Telephones connected to network.....	3,400,000
Telex Services.....	4,000
Trunk Line Channels.....	50,000
Staff (full-time).....	102,000
Transport Fleet (vehicles).....	13,000

## In a year:

Articles of mail handled.....	2,650,000,000
Telephone calls.....	2,450,000,000
Telegrams (despatched within and from Australia).....	23,400,000
Road Miles covered by transport fleet.....	123,000,000
Money Orders issued.....	11,370,000
Value.....	\$438,600,000
Postal Orders issued.....	12,360,000
Value.....	\$22,000,000

## Postal History in Australia

- 1809** Mr Isaac Nichols, who became recognised as Australia's first postmaster, was appointed in Sydney on 25 April, to take charge of mails.
- 1812** Mr John Beamont was appointed Postmaster, Hobart Town.
- 1828** Australia's first postman appointed in Sydney.
- 1829** Commander M. J. Currie, R.N., was appointed Postmaster, Fremantle.
- 1833** Mr Allman was appointed Postmaster, Moreton Bay.
- 1837** Mr Thomas Gilbert was appointed Postmaster, Adelaide, and Mr E. J. Foster was appointed Postmaster, Melbourne. First overland mail service between Sydney and Melbourne.
- 1838** Embossed postage covers were introduced in Sydney for 1s 3d per dozen. This was the first time in the world that a system of prepayment of postage by means of a 'stamped' letter became available.
- 1850** Uniform rates of postage were established in Australia. Compulsory prepayment of postage by adhesive stamps was introduced in N.S.W. and Victoria.
- 1855** First transportation of mail by rail from Sydney to Parramatta.
- 1856** Regular monthly steamship service to England established.

- 1863** Cobb & Co. became the official carriers of the nation's mail.
- 1875** Postcards first issued for sale in Australia at Sydney GPO.
- 1891** The Australian Colonies joined the Universal Postal Union.
- 1901** Federation. Introduction of Post and Telegraph Act under which all postal and telecommunications services were taken over by the Commonwealth under the control of a federal Postmaster-General.
- 1914** Australia's first air-mail was carried between Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1919** First overseas air-mail was carried between England and Australia.
- 1924** The last Cobb & Co. road mail service was discontinued.
- 1930** Mechanical mail handling introduced at Sydney Mail Exchange, for the first time in the world.
- 1939** Postal articles handled totalled 1,086,000,000.
- 1959** Operation Post Haste introduced to allow standard size letters to be carried by air, free of airmail surcharge.
- 1961** Postal articles handled totalled 2,048,069,000.
- 1962** The first automatic postal station installed, at Melbourne.
- 1964** Fiftieth anniversary of airmail in Australia. (See 1914 above.)

- 1965** New Sydney Mail Exchange opened. The exchange was designed to accommodate Australia's first electronic mail handling equipment incorporating destination coding techniques. The equipment was phased in gradually over the following three years.
- 1967** Postcode introduced. A four digit Postcode number allotted to every place in Australia to prepare for the introduction of electronic coding and sorting of mail in capital cities over the future years. Postcode will streamline manual sorting in the interim period. Electronic equipment at the Sydney Mail Exchange already operates in conjunction with Postcode.
- 1968** Postcodes were being placed on 75 per cent of mail in Australia.

## Developments in Telecommunications

- 1854** Australia's first telegraph line was opened from Williamstown to Melbourne.
- 1858** Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide linked by telegraph.
- 1859** Victoria-Tasmania submarine telegraph cable opened.
- 1861** Sydney-Brisbane telegraph line opened.
- 1872** The 2000 mile, Adelaide to Darwin Overland Telegraph Line completed. England-Java cable extended to Darwin and Australian network connected to London.
- 1877** Perth-Adelaide telegraph line opened. South Australia became first Australian colony to join the International Telegraph Union later to become International Telecommunication Union.
- 1878** First trunk telephone call demonstrated in South Australia between Semaphore and Pt Augusta (240 miles) and between Sydney and West Maitland (140 miles) only two years after Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.
- 1880** First telephone exchanges opened at Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne two years after world's first.
- 1883** Telephone exchanges opened in Adelaide and Hobart.

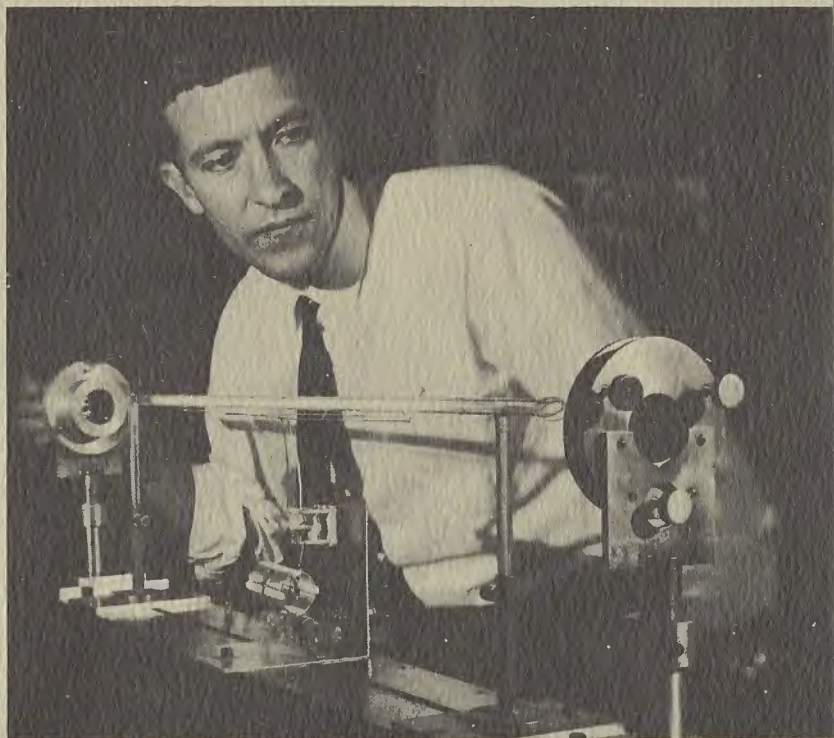


- 1887** Telephone exchange opened in Perth.
- 1901** Federation. Introduction of Post and Telegraph Act under which all postal and telecommunications services were taken over by the Commonwealth under the control of a federal Postmaster-General.
- 1902** Pacific telegraph cable opened. First interstate trunk line opened from Mt Gambier (South Australia) to Nelson (Victoria).
- 1907** Sydney-Melbourne trunk line service in operation and first Central Battery Telephone Exchange opened at Hobart.
- 1911** First automatic telephone exchange in Australia opened at the GPO Sydney, for internal use.
- 1912** Radio telegraph services introduced. First public automatic telephone exchange in Australia and second in British Empire opened at Geelong, Victoria. 100,000 telephone subscribers in Australia.
- 1922** Multiplex telegraph system established between Sydney and Melbourne.
- 1923** Conversion from morse to machine operation on main telegraph routes. Sydney-Brisbane telephone trunk line opened following introduction of thermionic repeaters (1922).
- 1924** Direct operator dialling over trunk routes introduced at some centres in Victoria.
- 1925** Australia's first telephone carrier system (three channels) installed between Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1926** First country automatic exchange opened.



*Most of Australia's postmen still carry their mail in bags on daily rounds on foot or on bicycles but in some areas modern aids such as this mail buggy are now used.*





*Post Office researchers are closely studying the possible use of Laser beams to provide large capacity links in Australia's telecommunications network.*

*(Left) Here a staff member is operating equipment in the big Post Office Computer Centre in Sydney. The Post Office is one of the biggest users of computers in Australia.*

*A microwave radio system installation in Queensland: typical of hundreds now installed all over Australia. Microwave systems today form a major part of a nation-wide trunk network which provides thousands of telephone and telegraph circuits and television programme relays.*



- 1927** First public overseas radiotelegraph service (beam wireless) opened between Australia and Europe. First telegraph carrier system started between Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1929** Melbourne-Sydney picturegram service began.
- 1930** Overseas radio-telephone service started.
- 1933** Table handset telephone and private-wire teleprinter services introduced.
- 1934** Beam picturegram service opened, Australia-England.
- 1936** Tasmania-mainland telephone service opened over the then longest submarine telephone cable in the world.
- 1940** 500,000 telephone subscribers in Australia.
- 1945** Inter-capital city operator dialling over trunk lines introduced.
- 1949** Telephones connected reach one million.
- 1950** First mobile radio-telephone exchange services introduced, Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1952** The first twenty-four channel carrier system radio link installed.
- 1953** 1,000,000 telephone subscribers in Australia.
- 1954** Teleprinter exchange service (Telex) opened in Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1956** Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) first introduced in Australia between Dandenong and Melbourne and between St Mary's and Sydney.

- 1959** TRESS — automatic transmission of telegrams through intermediate points, without manual handling, in operation for first time.

STD introduced in Maitland-Newcastle area, N.S.W.  
Broadband network: first broadband trunk system in Australia, a microwave radio link, opened between Melbourne and Bendigo, Vic.

- 1960** Automatic time and weather forecast services extended to all capital cities.

- 1961** Broadband network: Sydney-Canberra section of coaxial cable opened for all types of telecommunications traffic.

- 1962** Licensed civil radio communication stations in Australia reach 50,000.

Broadband network: Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne coaxial cable opened for all telecommunications traffic (first interstate broadband system).

STD introduced between Canberra and Sydney.  
Australia-New Zealand-Fiji links of the Commonwealth Pacific Cable (Compac) opened. Compac is a large capacity submarine coaxial cable.

- 1963** STD introduced between Canberra and Melbourne. First data transmission service introduced over telegraph circuits between Sydney and Melbourne.

Compac cable completed between Fiji and Hawaii and Vancouver. Cable officially opened by Her Majesty the Queen, 2 December.

Australian telephone operators able to dial direct

to subscribers in Canada, the USA and Britain.

- 1964** STD introduced between Sydney and Melbourne. Broadband network: Sydney-Brisbane microwave radio and coaxial cable system completed.

Australia becomes founder member with ten other nations of the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium (Intelsat) to establish a global system of commercial satellite links. Intelsat now has more than 60 member nations. Australia through the Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Australia) is the sixth largest contributor.

- 1965** South East Asian Commonwealth submarine coaxial cable (Seacom) opened between Singapore and Hong Kong.

Centenary of International Telecommunication Union (17 May). Founded in Paris as the International Telegraph Union, the I.T.U. has had a remarkable first centenary. First telecommunication system was morse telegraphy followed by voice telephone, and then radio. In recent years, the I.T.U. has sponsored international plans for the introduction of commercial communication satellites and future introduction of world subscriber trunk dialling.

STD introduced, Melbourne-Sydney.

STD introduced, Sydney-Brisbane.

STD introduced, Melbourne-Adelaide.

STD introduced, Melbourne-Launceston.



Early Bird satellite (Intelsat I) launched by the International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium over the Atlantic Ocean for experiments in satellite communication.

The two millionth telephone subscriber service connected.

More than 2,800,000 telephones in use.

**1966** Seacom submarine coaxial cable from Singapore reaches Cairns, Queensland.

Automatic Telex introduced.

Brisbane-Cairns microwave radio system completed. Melbourne-Adelaide microwave system completed.

First Intelsat II series commercial communications satellite launched in November over the Pacific Ocean, but failed to achieve a synchronous orbit.

Plans announced for the installation by 1970 of a microwave radio telecommunications system between South Australia and Western Australia as part of the national broadband network.

**1967** South East Asia Commonwealth Cable (Seacom) officially opened between Australia and Singapore. Seacom, a submarine coaxial cable, extends from Singapore, via Jesselton, Hong Kong, Guam, Madang, to Cairns, Queensland. Linked to Commonwealth Pacific Cable (Compac) at Sydney via microwave and coaxial cable land systems.

Second Intelsat II series commercial communica-

tions satellite launched in January in synchronous orbit over the Pacific Ocean.

Third Intelsat II series commercial communications satellite launched in March in synchronous orbit over the Atlantic Ocean.

Fourth Intelsat II series commercial communications satellite launched in September in synchronous orbit over the Pacific Ocean.

**1968** First earth station opened at Moree, N.S.W., by the Overseas Telecommunications Commission for transmission of public, commercial overseas telecommunications traffic via satellite. (Two more stations to be opened at Ceduna, (S.A.) and Carnarvon (W.A.) in 1969)

## Radio & Television Development

- 1901** First official record of practical application in Australia of radio communication with a ship at sea. Messages exchanged in an experiment on 18 May over a distance of 37 miles between H.M.S. *St George* and the Post Office signal station at Red Bluff (Point Ormond), Melbourne.
- 1905** First radio communication between two land stations over a distance of 180 miles between Devonport, Tasmania and Point Lonsdale, Victoria, by the Marconi Company.
- 1905** Introduction of Wireless Telegraphy Act and Regulations requiring all radio stations to be licensed by the Postmaster-General and to be subject to the requirements of the Act.
- 1910** Licence granted to the Australasian Wireless Company for a station on the roof of the Hotel Australia in Sydney to exchange telegraphic messages with ships.
- 1912** Sydney Radio station — Australia's first government coastal radio station — opened at Pennant Hills, on 19 August, to provide ship-to-shore communications. Similar station opened at Perth on 30 September.
- 1910** First Australian-owned merchant ships fitted with radio. They were the steamships *Riverina*, *Ultimaroa* and *Zeelandia*.

- 1921** Weekly experimental broadcasting transmissions undertaken by A.W.A. (A'Asia) Ltd.
- 1922** First police patrol car radio service established by Victorian Police Department.
- 1923** First radio broadcasting stations, 2FC and 2BL, opened in Sydney.
- 1924** First experimental transmission of wireless telegraphy signals from Australia to England.
- 1925** Inland Wireless system introduced leading later to the establishment of the Royal Flying Doctor Service.
- 1927** First public overseas radiotelegraph service (Beam radio) between Australia and Britain opened in April.
- 1929** National Broadcasting Service (Australian Broadcasting Commission) established.
- 1930** First Australian overseas radio-telephone service started, linking Australia and Britain.
- 1934** First overseas radio-picture service opened between Australia and Britain.
- 1940** Licensed civil radio communication stations including broadcasting and amateur radio stations reach 1,000.
- 1947** Licensing policy under Wireless Telegraphy Act expanded to allow introduction of privately operated VHF land and harbour mobile radio-telephones.
- 1948** Commonwealth Telegraph Agreement providing for

co-ordination of international services by the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board. Overseas Telecommunications Commission (Aust.) founded to maintain and develop all public overseas telecommunications services by both cable and radio.

Australia's Coastal Radio Service transferred to O.T.C.

- 1950** First telephone exchange service introduced for mobile radio telephone units in Melbourne and Sydney.
- 1956** Television introduced, stage 1 — First national (ABC) and commercial television stations opened in Sydney and Melbourne. One national and two commercial stations began transmission in each city.
- 1959/60** Television introduced, stage 2 — One national and two commercial television stations began operation in Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart.
- One million television sets licensed.
- 1962** Completion of Sydney-Melbourne coaxial telecommunications cable makes possible first inter-state television relays.
- Television, stage 3 — Total of 13 new television stations, including national and commercial, progressively opened in provincial centres in all states.
- Licensed civil radio stations, including broadcasting and amateur stations, total 50,000.
- Plans announced for the future gradual extension of television services to 20 additional remote country centres in all states on the basis of one national

and one commercial station respectively.

- 1963** First interstate relay of television programmes over Sydney-Melbourne coaxial cable.
- 1964** A third commercial station opened in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide; and a second in Perth.
- 1966** First experimental television transmission via Pacific satellite, Intelsat II, directly between Australia and an overseas country. Test patterns were transmitted on 24 November between the O.T.C. earth station, Carnarvon, W.A., and a British earth station at Goonhilly Downs, Cornwall, England. The following afternoon an exchange live television programmes was achieved between Australia and England via the satellite.
- 1967** First live telecast directly between Canada and Australia via Pacific satellite, A.T.S.-1. The telecast covered Australia Day at Expo '67, Montreal, and lasted for eight hours. A.T.S.-1 satellite is an experimental satellite launched in 1966 by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States.
- Australia participates in the first world-wide, live television hook-up via various satellites during the 'Our World' programme in which 22 countries contributed to and received this historical programme.
- 1968** First ground station opened at Moree, N.S.W., by the Overseas Telecommunications Commission for transmission of public, commercial telecommunications via satellite systems, including TV.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN POST OFFICE

