



## House of Assembly

Thursday, 24 February 2011

### AUSTRALIA POST

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:44): Today I wish to bring to the attention of the house an issue that has become of great concern to some members of my electorate. This matter centres on a service that many of us take for granted; that is, a regular and reliable mail delivery service. At the outset I wish to emphasise that my criticisms are not of the local post offices, as the mail is delivered by contractors and the contractors are managed outside the local area.

The residents of Parkers Road and Barkley Drive, Gawler Belt, brought this issue to my attention in late July 2010, when one constituent lodged a formal complaint regarding the repeated receipt of her neighbours' mail and non-delivery of her own mail. In response to this constituent's concerns, I contacted all the residents along the two streets, conducting a survey asking for their own experiences with the services and delivery of mail by Australia Post. It soon became apparent that this initial complaint

was just the tip of the iceberg. The survey highlighted an extensive failure by Australia Post to deliver mail in a time in excess of two years.

From these two streets, 31 responses were returned to my office, 30 of which expressed problems with mail delivery. The responses included—but were not exclusive—the receipt of neighbours' mail, lost mail, the receipt of mail addressed to completely different streets, utility accounts and bills missing that had led to many instances of residents being charged late fees, receipt of mail that had been opened, and damaged mail which had not been delivered pursuant to normal Australia Post standards.

These issues, as I am sure you will appreciate, caused residents considerable distress and inconvenience. After numerous complaints to Australia Post, residents had resorted to taking matters into their own hands by organising swap meets for misdelivered mail. I am sure that you would agree that this is not the level of service that should be expected from our national mail carrier.

In attempting to resolve this matter, my office contacted the state retail office of Australia Post on 30 August 2010. A follow-up letter was then emailed to Australia Post on 7 September 2010 stating my concerns, including a table of the survey's findings to illustrate the issues raised. A reply received by my office on 17 September stated that Australia Post was

investigating matters, and a promise was made to 'work closely with a mail delivery contractor to address issues with a view to achieving a significant improvement to delivery standards'.

After several follow-up phone conversations, I received what seemed to be a concluding letter from Australia Post stating that 'remedial action had been taken including refining work practices in consultation with the contractor'. Australia Post assured me of their confidence that these measures would significantly improve delivery standards in the area. Unfortunately, the issues with mail delivery continued and even spread to a neighbouring street, Kerr Road, with residents there reporting similar issues.

Although Australia Post further assured me that measures were taken, including removing and replacing contractors, mentoring new staff and providing contractors with names of residents, there was still no discernible improvement to the mail delivery service. Following this continued failure, I conducted a community meeting in the region to address developing issues such as the delivery of mail. Australia Post was invited and encouraged to attend this meeting, but much to the disappointment of myself and those residents, no representative could attend.

It was no surprise to me that the vast majority of this meeting was focused on the distress caused by this issue, with residents

questioning why such a simple issue had continued for such an extended period of time despite many complaints. Also, at the meeting a resident gave me a copy of a letter Australia Post had sent to residents as a means of resolving the issues. I found this letter, quite frankly, to be offensive. Both the tone and content implied that the faults of Australia Post were with the customer base and not with processes within the organisation itself.

A lack of accountability has not only frustrated me, but it has antagonised a region of dissatisfied customers. Nevertheless, I sought to investigate the claims of Australia Post. Through their own visits, conducted by Australia Post, I am advised that the majority of residents are complying with Australia Post protocols. This is further compounded by the fact that many residents have mail delivered addressed to the wrong street, let alone the wrong residence.

While the renumbering of houses in the area, due to council planning, has complicated the issue, the service of Australia Post in this area is unacceptable. A period of transition should have been afforded to residents to alter their address in line with the new council numbers. Surely a national body such as Australia Post must have the internal structures and capabilities to be able to cope with such events, as it is not an isolated case.

Many residents are now complaining that letters, cards and

presents from overseas did not reach their destinations. I believe this to be an unwarranted burden for the people of the area. After a frustrating six-month period, I am now receiving reports that the delivery of mail is slowly improving. I will continue to monitor the situation.

**Time expired.**