

Short-paid Mail from Australia to New Zealand

December 11, 1936 to February 28, 1954 - Part II

by Stephen F Prest and Pat Skinner

Part I of these writings on short-paid mail from Australia to New Zealand which appeared in the December 2011 issue of *The Mail Coach* ⁽¹⁾ identified four sub-periods where the relative Australian and New Zealand conversion rates to the centime varied for the purposes of determining amounts payable on short-paid Australian mail entering New Zealand during the King George VI Period. This Part II article provides readers with some further information together with examples of short-paid mail for the T10/T10 and T4/T10 sub-periods.

Australian Inland Airmail Fees

Table 2 of Part I provides the rates applicable to Australian letters conveyed by surface means to New Zealand plus the fee payable in Australia for conveyance via by New Zealand Inland Airmail. It was also possible for Australians to request conveyance via Australian Domestic Airmail followed by surface conveyance to New Zealand. In this case, the following rates (expressed in Part I Table 2 format) applied from the start of the King George VI Period until the introduction of regular airmail service April 30, 1940 ⁽²⁾.

Australian Domestic Airmail + Surface Conveyance to New Zealand

December 11, 1936: 2d. per 1 oz. + 3d. per ½ oz. (Airmail Fee)

The T10/10 Sub-period (December 11, 1936 to June 30, 1948)

Both Australia and New Zealand used a conversion rate of 1d. = 10 centimes at the start of the King George VI Period. It is of note however that, to date, the authors have only observed Australian/New Zealand short-paid covers bearing tax marking in shillings and pence rather than centimes during the T10/T10 sub-period. Further research is required to establish whether the non-use of tax markings in centimes between the two administrations was a matter of policy on their respective parts during the T10/T10 sub-period.

As noted in Part I, the surface and airmail letter rates remained relatively stable through the first twelve years of the King George VI Period. As one would expect, most of the short-paid mail during the T10/T10 sub-period seemed to arise as result overweight letters being insufficiently prepaid. However, the letter depicted in Figure 1 overleaf courtesy of Michael Furfie, is an example of where it seems insufficient postage has been paid for both airmail fees and weight. The letter, post marked as received in Dunedin 29 JE 38 has 10d. New Zealand postage due affixed. Australian postal authorities had determined the letter, sent airmail and weighing between ½ and 1 oz., was underpaid by 5d. (2d. letter rate + 2 x 3d. per ½d. = 8d. less 3d. paid equals 5d. short-paid). The corresponding double deficiency was indicated with a “T” hand-stamp and 10d. in manuscript.



Image courtesy of
Mr. Michael Furfie

Figure 1. Domestic Australian Airmail Letter surface conveyed to New Zealand mailed from Strathalbyn, South Australia June 20, 1938, charged 10d. in Postage Due on June 29, 1938 in Dunedin

Separate airmail fees fell away with the establishment of regular scheduled airmail services between Australia and New Zealand on April 30/May 1, 1940. Insufficient prepayment for overweight Australian airmail letters to New Zealand then became a comparatively straightforward calculation of two times the 5d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. rate for the balance of the T10/T10 period ending June 30, 1948. Figure 2 below is a typical example of an airmail letter determined as being overweight by Australian postal authorities and underpaid by 5d., taxed 10d. for the second $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce.



Figure 2. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Traralgon, Victoria Nov 30, 1943 charged 10d. in Postage Due on December 3, 1943 in Petone

The T4/T10 Sub-period (July 1, 1948 to November 30, 1949)

Australia changed its conversion rate for postage due purposes to 1d. = 4 centimes as of July 1, 1948 ⁽³⁾. This rate was maintained for a period of some seventeen months before a second devaluation to 1d. = 3 centimes came into effect December 1, 1949 ⁽⁴⁾. Presently we have only a single cover in our collection that illustrates the T4/T10 sub-period as shown in Figure 3. The pair of 2½d. 1948 Australian Scout Jamboree stamps short-paid the 5½d. airmail rate to New Zealand by ½d. or 1d. double deficient. The cover is marked T4 centimes by PNG (Australian) postal authorities in accordance with the new conversion rates adopted by the Australian Post Office in July 1948.

The New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department provided new instructions as to how to handle short-paid mail from Australia following Australia's July 1948 devaluation.

Order No. 10 of the December 1, 1948 Official Circular reads as follows:

10. Rule 395 (General and Postal).-Correspondence from Australia: Taxing of Short-paid Articles

"The Australian Post Office has notified this administration that, in future, short-paid correspondence from Australia will be taxed in centimes instead of in shillings and pence as previously. The conversion rate will be 4 centimes = 1d. In the direction from New Zealand to Australia, all surcharges will continue to be expressed in shillings and pence.

"Rule 395 (General and Postal): Add a new paragraph as follows:

"Exceptionally, the surcharge rate on correspondence originating in Australia is to be 4 centimes (4c.) = 1d. A letter which should have been prepaid 2½d. but which has only 1d. in postage affixed would be surcharged by the Australian Post Office 12c. (3d.), being double the deficiency of 1½d. A letter short-paid ½d. (double deficiency 1d. = 4 c.) would, however, be surcharged 5c. as, under Postal Union Regulations, the minimum surcharge imposed must not be less than 5c. In such case the amount of 1d. should be collected on delivery."

(P & T. 1948/1734)

The cover illustrated in Figure 3 is back-stamped as having been received in Auckland 20 AP 49 and is stamped on the front with a "1d. To Pay Double Deficient Postage" by New Zealand postal authorities in line with the instructions noted above.

While the instructions are clear that the minimum of 1d. would be charged for a letter from Australia prepaid ½d. in deficient postage irrespective of the 4 centime deficiency indicated by Australian postal authorities, it is less clear what the Post and Telegraph Department administration was expecting of its postmasters in the circumstances of higher levels of deficiency.

In the example provided in the instruction above, it is not clear whether postmasters were expected to divide the 12 centime deficiency by New Zealand's conversion rate of 10 centimes = 1d. or, alternatively, whether postmasters were to use the Australian conversion rate of 4 centime = 1d. to arrive at a determination of 3d. in postage due. This latter approach would lead to the same result as applying the long standing previous policy of determining deficient postage in shillings and pence.

It will require examination of further examples of T4/T10 short-paid mail from Australia with higher amounts of deficient postage before firm conclusions can be reached regarding Post and Telegraph Department policies on this matter.



Figure 3. Inbound Airmail Letter mailed from Abau, PNG, April 20, 1949 charged 1d. in Postage Due on May 11, 1949 in Auckland

Concluding Thoughts

Treatment of incoming short-paid Australian mail was a relatively straightforward matter during the T10/T10 sub-period when both countries used a common exchange rate of 10 centimes = 1d. From evidence to hand at present, all incoming Australian short-paid mail appears to have been marked in shillings and pence during the T10/T10 sub-period. However once Australia changed its conversion rate to 4 centime = 1d. in July 1948, it appears New Zealand may have continued to determine postage due in shillings and pence on incoming short-paid Australian mail. Further examples of covers from the T4/T10 sub-period between July 1948 and November 1949 need to be examined to confirm this conclusion.

... to be continued

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the gracious assistance provided by Michael Furfie who kindly has provided the cover found in Figure 1 and also Mr. Paul Yap and Mr. Ken Snelson who, together with Michael, have graciously provided the authors with the benefit of their knowledge and insights on matters related to short-paid mail.

References:

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- (3) "New South Wales tax rates 1891-1966" by Peter Granfield, (Gold Medal Exhibit – Sydney 2011) via www.nswtaxmarks.com
- (4) "Exchange Rate change to 1d = 3 centimes" by Peter Granfield, (January 2009) via www.nswtaxmarks.com/?cat=61