

Short-paid Mail from Australia to New Zealand

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

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. The Part II article which appeared in the February 2012 issue of *The Mail Coach* ⁽²⁾ described examples of short-paid mail for the T10/T10 and T4/T10 sub-periods ending June 1948 and November 1949 respectively. This Part III article deals with the final two T3/T10 and T3/T4 sub-periods that occurred in the final years of the New Zealand George VI Period.

The T3/10 Sub-period (December 1, 1949 to February 28, 1950)

On December 1, 1949 Australia lowered its exchange rate relative to the Gold centime for the second time in eighteen months, setting the rate at 1d. Australian = 3 centimes down from 1d. Australian = 4 centimes. New Zealand maintained its exchange rate at 1d. New Zealand = 10 centimes until February 28, 1950. This created a situation where for a period of three months, there was a more than a threefold difference in the amount Australia and New Zealand were collecting in postage due for an equivalent deficiency in pence.



Figure 1. Australian Airmail Letter mailed from Sydney, N.S.W. December 27, 1949 charged 1d. minimum in Postage Due on December 29, 1949 in Dunedin

The envelope in Figure 1, previously in the Paul Yap collection, is an early example of an Australian T3 marking. Being dated December 27, 1949, it serves to confirm Peter Granfield's findings that Australian postal authorities adopted the 1d. = 3 centimes exchange rate in December 1949 ⁽³⁾, not December 1950 as has been thought previously.

The letter is franked with a pair of Australian 1948 2½d. Sir Ferdinand von Mueller commemoratives which short-paid the ruling airmail rate of 5½d. per half ounce. Double the halfpenny deficiency converted to 3 centimes as of early December 1950. As described in Part II, The Post and Telegraph Department had adopted a policy of charging a minimum of 1d. in postage due as of July 1948 for incoming short-paid mail from Australia and the example in Figure 1 was treated accordingly by Dunedin postal officials.

As noted in Part I, the T3/T10 period was very brief, only three months between December 1949 and February 1950. Surviving covers in this period are considered to be very scarce.

The T3/4 Sub-period (March 1, 1950 to February 28, 1954 onwards)

By early 1950, many important postal jurisdictions such as Canada, the United States and Australia had devalued their currencies relative to the Gold centime for postage due purposes. New Zealand followed suit on in March 1950, adopting the exchange rate of 1d. = 4 centimes, down from 1d. = 10 centimes⁽⁴⁾. This had the effect of increasing the tax on incoming short-paid mail by a factor of 2.5 thus creating an increased burden on recipients. But it also had the effect of leveling the playing field with other postal administrations worldwide.

Recently, through the kind auspices of the Christchurch Philatelic Society Library, we were able to examine a copy of the Post & Telegraph Postal Rules (1953) and in particular the section dealing with short-paid mail⁽⁵⁾. Rules 268 and 269 within the sub-section entitled “Method of Surcharging” are relevant in respect to short-paid mail from Australia during the late stages of the George VI Period.

268. The rate of conversion of shillings and pence to centimes is 4 centimes to 1d., except that the minimum surcharge is 5 centimes.
Examples of surcharging —

| | | | |
|------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| 1d. | = 5 centimes. | 3d. | = 12 centimes |
| 1½d. | = 6 ” | 1s. | = 48 ” |
| 2d. | = 8 ” | 2s. 6d. | = 120 ” |

269. Surcharges marked in centimes on incoming articles are to be converted at the same rate—viz., 1d. to 4 centimes. A resulting fraction of a penny is to be ignored if under ½d. and if ½d. or over is to be charged as 1d.

Rule 268 is unchanged from those that came into effect in March 1950⁽⁴⁾. Rule 269 provides instruction as how postmasters were to treat fractional pence determined after dividing the indicated deficiency in centimes recorded by the forwarding overseas jurisdiction. This was particularly pertinent in the case of incoming Australian mail where the multiplier of three centimes per pence often resulted in fractional one-quarter increments when converted in New Zealand.

Figures 2 and 3 below provide an interesting comparison and demonstrate that the rounding up or down policy outlined in the 1953 Rule 269. was not consistently applied throughout all post offices in New Zealand. Both letters from Australia were franked with 6½d. in postage which underpaid the 8d. each ½ ounce rate for an airmail letter to New Zealand by 1½d. Both letters, mailed within two weeks of one another in March 1953, are correctly marked as being T 9 centimes in postage due.

Despite these similarities, the letters received different treatment at the hands of the New Zealand postal officials. The letter illustrated in Figure 2 is postmarked “Postman’s Branch” Hamilton March 16th and charged 2½d. in postage due. In this case, the Hamilton post office “Rounded-up” the fractional ¼d. postage due to the nearest half penny. Meanwhile, on March 27th the recipient of the letter illustrated in Figure 3 below was charged 2d. in postage due after the post office in Taihape “Rounded-down the fractional ¼d. due in accordance with the then current post office rules.



*Figure 2. Australian Airmail Letter mailed from Melbourne, Victoria March 12, 1953
Rated T 9 centimes, charged 2½d. in Postage Due on March 16, 1953 in Hamilton
(Fractional ¼d. (Incorrectly) Rounded Up)*



*Figure 3. Australian Airmail Letter mailed from Sydney N.S.W. March 25, 1953
Rated T 9 centimes, charged 2d. in Postage Due on March 27, 1953 in Taihape
(Fractional ¼d. (Correctly) Rounded Down)*

Concluding Thoughts

This article concludes a three part overview of short-paid Australian mail into New Zealand during the George VI Period. 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. However, once both administrations began to devalue their respective home currency conversion rates to the centime in the late 1940's, New Zealand's Post & Telegraph Department needed to put in place new rules governing postage due transactions. Consistent application of these rules across all the post offices proved problematic with the result mis-application of the new regulations occurred in the later stages of the George VI Period from 1950 to 1954.

Once Australia adopted lower conversion rates commencing in July 1948, New Zealand's collections of postage due on incoming short-paid Australian were dramatically reduced and remained so until the Post & Telegraph Department's own devaluation in March 1950. From a postal history viewpoint, surviving covers during this 20 month period are very scarce, particularly the T3/T10 Period which lasted just three months between December 1949 and March 1950.

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 1d. = 4 centimes in July 1948, Australia appears to have adopted a policy of marking postage due in centimes for mail destined to New Zealand. To date, the authors have only seen three Australian short-paid covers from this period, all half penny deficient, to which New Zealand applied the minimum 1d. postage due payable. How New Zealand may have treated short-paid incoming Australian letters with higher levels of centimes indicated remains to be determined, hopefully with the discovery of additional covers in the future.

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References:

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