



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 11 November 1999

AUSTRALIA POST BULK DISCOUNTS

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.18 a.m.): Today I want to talk about a Federal Government-owned monopoly, Australia Post, and a recent decision that it took to kick small business, clubs and small associations in the guts. Prior to 4 October this year, any individual, business or club could get a discounted cost of 38c per letter for bulk posting more than 50 letters in their local postcode area. What has Australia Post done to these small business operators and volunteer clubs? It has slugged them with a 7c per letter increase by abolishing bulk post discounts for letter quantities of less than 300. This is Australia Post, which last year made a profit of \$247.8m but cannot see its way clear to do something for the little people.

It is true that the pre-sort discount post quantity at Australia Post has had the minimum reduced from 2,500 to 300, but the point is that many small businesses and clubs simply do not have sufficient people on their mailing lists in order to receive the discount. I am talking about associations which mail out 50 to 300 letters, such as the Bayside Rheumatism and Arthritis Group Support. BRAGS helps many people who are ill or crippled with arthritis—most of them senior citizens or pensioners.

I know that Australia Post realises that it has done the wrong thing. It has only abolished the discount for clubs, small businesses and individuals who are in the city. If one lives at a country address, the minimum 50 discount still applies. I do not in any way begrudge our country cousins keeping the discount, but why should it not apply to the city as well? Why should organisations such as BRAGS be slugged 7c per letter?

The fact is that Australia Post now has new barcode technology that allocates each specific address in Australia with a unique number. It also has machines that can read typed street numbers, streets and suburb details on letters and apply the barcode at the time of sorting. Australia Post still gets its technology gains from non-barcode-type letters, but it is not prepared to pass on any cost savings at all to small businesses and clubs in the city who post between 50 and 300 letters at a time. I say to Australia Post that if it wants the respect and support of the Australian support, it will have to lift its act.
