



Stamp Issue Policy

Guide to the selection of stamp themes

Introduction

Australia Post produces postage stamps and postal stationery (pre-paid postage items). Many requests are received each year from members of the general public, associations, institutions and government departments for specific subjects to be featured on stamps and postal stationery. Although the range of possible subjects is limitless, for practical reasons not all suggestions can be adopted. While variety in the themes featured on stamps is desirable, this has to be balanced by the needs of the postal system, production capacities (with particular regard to the interests of the philatelic community) and the propriety of particular subject matter. As a consequence, criteria have been established against which potential themes are considered.

Postage Stamps

During the year Australian stamp issues are produced to meet the needs of mail users and collectors. One or two of these may be definitive issues, if required (stamps released for long-term usage); three stamp issues during the calendar year comprise the annual Australia Post Australian Legends Award, King's Birthday and Christmas issues; with the remaining a combination of commemorative themes and subjects proposed by collectors, the public and informed by regular research.

In addition to these standard stamp issues, two to four additional stamp issues may be produced to provide stamps for special events (such as an Olympic Games) or for use in the Personalised Stamps service as "special occasion" stamps. As this suggests, the capacity for the Australian stamp program to accommodate individual requests for stamps is limited. Conformity with the criteria set out below does not guarantee the selection of any individual theme or subject, due to the limited number of stamps issued each year and the need to create a varied and balanced program. The selection process begins at least two years before the stamps are issued to allow for detailed research, the development of designs, printing and the stamp production process.

What subjects may be featured on stamps?

- All subjects must be directly related to Australia, be of outstanding national or international interest and/or significance, and enjoy popular acclaim.
- All subjects must be capable of satisfactory depiction at stamp size.
- Anniversaries commemorated must be of 50 years or multiples of 50 years.
- Meetings and conferences may be honoured on commemorative stamps only in very rare circumstances involving heads of national governments.

Subjects that may not be featured on stamps are:

- Anniversaries of the death of any individual.
- Matters of interest to only a narrow section of the community, or to a region or to a single state or territory.
- Anniversaries of the founding of a city, town or local government body.
- Anniversaries of events connected with religious organisations, political parties or groups, commercial enterprises or products, and subjects likely to cause public divisiveness.
- Recurring events held in Australia, including awards and festivals, except Australia Day, King's Birthday, Christmas and major events of philatelic interest.

When may a living person be depicted on stamps?

Certain living people may be depicted on standard Australian stamps and postal stationery in certain circumstances. They are:

- The monarch and other members of the Royal Family.
- Recipients of the Australia Post Australian Legends Award.
- Australian winners of gold medals at Olympic Games.
- Australian recipients of the Victoria Cross.
- Unidentified Australians featured as representatives of a group/section of society, rather than as individuals in their own right.

Special Event and Special Occasion stamps

Special Event and Special Occasion stamps are produced where appropriate for the Australia Post business. Accordingly there is a greater flexibility with the subject matter for these stamps. When determining what special subjects are appropriate in any given year consideration is given as to whether:

- The event or occasion is of interest to a significant percentage of the Australian population.
- The event or occasion is a celebration of positive values.
- There is likely to be a demand for the stamp.
- The stamp themes are aligned to the social needs of domestic and corporate mail users for the traditional letter mail service. These can include, but are not restricted to, the celebration of key life events and milestones.

Children's stamp issues

A number of stamp issues specially designed for children are incorporated into the standard Australian stamp issue program each year. These stamp issues will feature a theme of particular appeal to children and will be given special consideration when determining what they may feature on the stamp when compared to other standard Australian stamp issues.

Australian Territories stamps

Postage stamps are issued by Australia Post for Australia's external territories of Norfolk Island, Australian Antarctic Territory, Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Events or anniversaries may be commemorated subject to the same criteria applied to Australian postage stamps. However, a more liberal interpretation of individual provisions may apply because of the infrequency of events or anniversaries associated with Australian territories.

Joint stamp issues

From time to time Australia Post may release a stamp issue jointly with another country. These stamp issues allow two or more countries to collaborate to commemorate a significant event or subject that they have in common. Notwithstanding the above points, special consideration may be applied from time to time as deemed appropriate by Australia Post to the subjects depicted on these stamps.

Postal Stationery

Postal stationery consists of postage paid envelopes, pre-stamped envelopes and aerogrammes. Australia Post receives many worthwhile requests which cannot be featured on stamps. Postal stationery, particularly pre-stamped envelopes, provides another method of honouring events and anniversaries.

Postage Paid and Pre-stamped Envelopes

Postage paid envelopes illustrate many themes, including flora, fauna, architecture, scenery, flags, emblems and insignia representing the states, territories and Commonwealth of Australia. The envelopes are not printed with a specific denomination.

Pre-stamped envelopes are similar to postage paid envelopes but the denomination is printed in the stamp area. The following criteria are applied in the selection of subject matter for pre-stamped envelopes:

- All subjects must be directly related to Australia and of general interest and appeal.
- Anniversaries commemorated must be 25 years or multiples of 25 years.
- Meetings or conferences may be commemorated provided they are held in Australia, are international in participation, at least partly sponsored by the Australian government and are of general interest.
- Anniversaries of educational, professional, charitable or sporting organisations and institutions may be commemorated, provided that such anniversaries commemorate the founding of such activities in Australia.

Subjects excluded from depiction on pre-stamped envelopes are indicated under “Postage Stamps”.

Aerogrammes

Definitive aerogrammes are issued every two years for ongoing postal requirements. Commemorative aerogrammes may be issued as needed for events of international significance that are participated in or hosted by Australia.

How to Suggest Stamp Subjects

Suggestions for subjects that meet the criteria for both Australian and Australian territories stamps and postal stationery may be forwarded to:

The Manager
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