



AP Ref: CSG 06000250

HEADQUARTERS

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Mr Philip Cohen
Antique Arms & Militaria Auctions
PO Box 422
SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

13 April 2006

Dear Mr Cohen

The Managing Director has asked me to reply to your letter of 17 March 2006 concerning Australia Post's decision to prohibit the carriage of firearms, firearm parts and items of weaponry in the international mail. Unfortunately, we have no record of receipt of your letter of 1 February 2006 concerning this matter.

The attached letter to the Commonwealth Ombudsman of 23 February 2003, which you quoted from several times in your letter, contains the full background to and rationale for Australia Post's decision.

In regard to the issues raised in your current letter, under section 32 of the Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989, the Board of Directors has the power to determine the terms and conditions for the provision of postal services, including which particular goods may be carried by post.

Australia Post can continue to carry firearms and firearm parts in the domestic mail because it has end-to-end accountability for the mail paths and can carry them without the likelihood of disruption or delay. In the international mail, there are numerous intermediate countries and ports where screening can delay entire mail despatches.

Australia Post acknowledges that firearms and firearm parts imported and exported legitimately may be clearly marked and accurately described on the packaging. However, manifests do not provide for the identification of specific items inside sealed bulk mail containers.

Furthermore, mail handlers/screeners using x-ray or metal detection technology do not have access to permits or documents accompanying individual items. Operationally, there is simply no way that postal authorities can pre-advise or identify legitimate firearms and firearm parts to parties handling or screening international mail despatches.

2.

Firearm parts are included in the prohibition because Australia Post wants the policy to be as clear and operable as possible. Firearm parts can cause delays to mail despatches at numerous intermediate countries and ports where Australia Post has no control over the actions taken or conclusions reached by the third parties involved.

Australia Post fully recognises that its policy will disappoint and inconvenience some individuals and industry groups who will need to consider using specialist handling companies for the import and export of firearms items. However, Australia Post's responsibility for staff safety, network security and the best interests of all postal users must be paramount when it makes decisions about the carriage of particular commodities or classes of goods.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Ondrasek', written in a cursive style.

Cheryl Ondrasek
Corporate Services Group



AP Ref: CSG 06000093

HEADQUARTERS

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Mr Denny Hughes
Commonwealth Ombudsman
Melbourne Office
Level 10, Casselden Place
2 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

23 February 2006

Dear Mr Hughes

I refer to your e-mail inquiry to our Customer Contact Centre (VIC) of 1 February 2006 concerning Australia Post's decision to prohibit the carriage of firearms, firearm parts and items of weaponry in the international mail. I apologise for the delay in replying to you on this matter.

Australia Post has advised customers and other postal administrations that as of January 2006 it will no longer accept international postings containing firearms, firearm parts and items of weaponry.

The prohibition is in response to increasing instances of mail processing delays and the temporary closure of facilities caused when Customs x-ray screening detects guns, ordinances or other potentially dangerous items in the international mail.

Nationally there were 81 instances last year where processing had to be interrupted or stopped for periods of up to three hours following the detection of suspect articles. In Sydney alone, there were 52 such incidents, an average of one per week.

In addition, the states and territories have different legislation on the use of the post for sending and receiving firearms to and from overseas. All states, except Queensland, effectively prohibit the use of the post for sending firearms overseas.

Similarly, the import of such items by post is effectively prohibited by New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. In Tasmania, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory the prohibition extends to firearms and firearm parts.

For its part, Australia Post has an obligation to ensure that it is not complicit in any breach of the state or territory legislation.

2.

Australia Post is not the first postal administration to introduce a prohibition in this area. Canada, Austria, China, Denmark, Greece, Japan and Russia have already prohibited the carriage of firearms and firearm parts in their postal networks. A further 76 countries prohibit the carriage of firearms.

Unfortunately, Australia Post cannot provide any exemptions from the prohibition because the operational processes and communication systems inherent in an international postal network do not allow for the identification of legitimate/illegitimate items within bulk mail containers. This means that all firearms and firearm parts cause serious delays to entire mail despatches and pose a potential threat to the safety and security of the network.

While Australia Post recognises that the prohibition will inconvenience some people, the corporation's primary responsibility is for the safety of its staff and the security/reliability of the network. People wishing to send or receive permitted categories of firearms, firearm parts and weaponry can use the services offered by companies that specialise in the handling of dangerous goods.

To ease the transition, Australia Post has allowed a grace period for the receipt of items mailed to Australia before the implementation of the prohibition. Thus, items arriving by Air were accepted up to 1 February 2006 and those coming by Sea will be accepted up to 1 April 2006.

Domestically, the conditions under which Australia Post carries firearms, firearm parts and weaponry are unchanged, however, the senders and addressees must continue to comply with relevant state and territory legislation.

The attached Customer Advice sheet contains information on items deemed to be "firearm parts" and exclusions from the definition of "items of weaponry".

Thank you for taking the time to write to us on this matter. I trust the above helps to clarify the background to and rationale for Australia Post's decision.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Ondrasek
Corporate Services Group