

Study of the  
1977  
CHRISTMAS STAMPS  
issued  
31 October 1977

The 15c stamp was the first Christmas stamp issued by Australia Post that did not have a religious theme. As a result it caused a lot of controversy at the time. The 45c stamp retained a religious theme, showing the Madonna and child.

This stamp was also only the second issued by Australia Post showing a cartoon character. The first stamps issued with a cartoon character were the metric conversion stamps in 1973.

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**References:**

- Philatelic Bulletin, Vol 25, No 2 (Whole 134), published by Australia Post, December 1977, page 20  
 Philatelic Bulletin, Vol 25, No 3 (Whole 135), published by Australia Post, March 1978, page 62  
 Australian Decimal Varieties, David McCleary, self published, 1986 Supplement  
 Australian Commonwealth Specialists Catalogue, Vol 2 Decimals 1975-91, published Brusden-White, 2002

**15c "Surfing Santa" stamp**

- stamp size 24.15 x 37.75 mm
- printed on Burnie unwatermarked KP6T paper incorporating heleon with green tinted PVA gum
- perforation 14 x 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>
- designed by Roger Roberts, Adelaide
- colours in order of printing – yellow, red, blue, black
- printed on the Rembrandt Press, at the Note Issue Department of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Melbourne
- quantity issued = 52,457,500 stamps
- paid the 15c special concession rate for standard size envelopes containing Christmas cards for delivery within Australia



**45c 'Madonna and Child' stamp**

- stamp size = 25 mm x 37.5 mm
- printed on Shoalhaven unwatermarked KP6T incorporating heleon with pink tinted PVA gum
- perforation 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>
- designed by Jackie O'Brien, Melbourne
- colours in order of printing – buff-ochre, light blue, black
- printed on the Chambon Press, at the Note Issue Department of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Melbourne
- quantity issued = 5,378,000 stamps
- paid the 45c Zone 5 air mail rate (Europe and United Kingdom), the destination of the majority of overseas addressed mail at Christmas

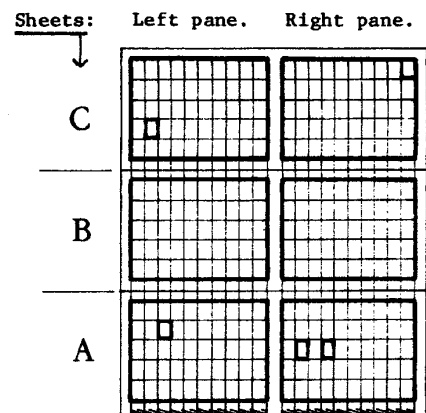


Both of these stamps were withdrawn from Philatelic Sales Centres on 30 October 1978.



# 15c Christmas 1977 'Surfing Santa' stamp - printing details and constant plate varieties

These stamps were printed in sheets of 300, which were guillotined into three sheets of 100 for distribution to post offices. The three sheets were known as A, B and C. Each sheet consisted of left and right panes of 50, each 5 horizontal rows of 10 stamps separated by a stamp width blank gutter. The stamps were printed in 4 colours, in the order yellow, red, blue and black. A band of repeating diagonal colour bars is located on the bottom selvedge of sheet A.



During printing the red cylinder was damaged and a new red cylinder was prepared. The second red cylinder was more deeply etched than the original, so that the stamps printed from it show redder hands and feet. The new red cylinder was used for approximately two thirds of the printing.



Blocks with original red cylinder at left, second red cylinder at right. Note redness in hands and feet.

Constant plate varieties

Sheet A, L2/3 - red line on surfboard, ACSC 787d



Sheet A, R3/4 - pink flaw under nose and red line on beard, ACSC 787e



Sheet C, R1/10 - pink area at right, opposite belt, ACSC 787f. This flaw is seen on some stamps in column 10 on this sheet.





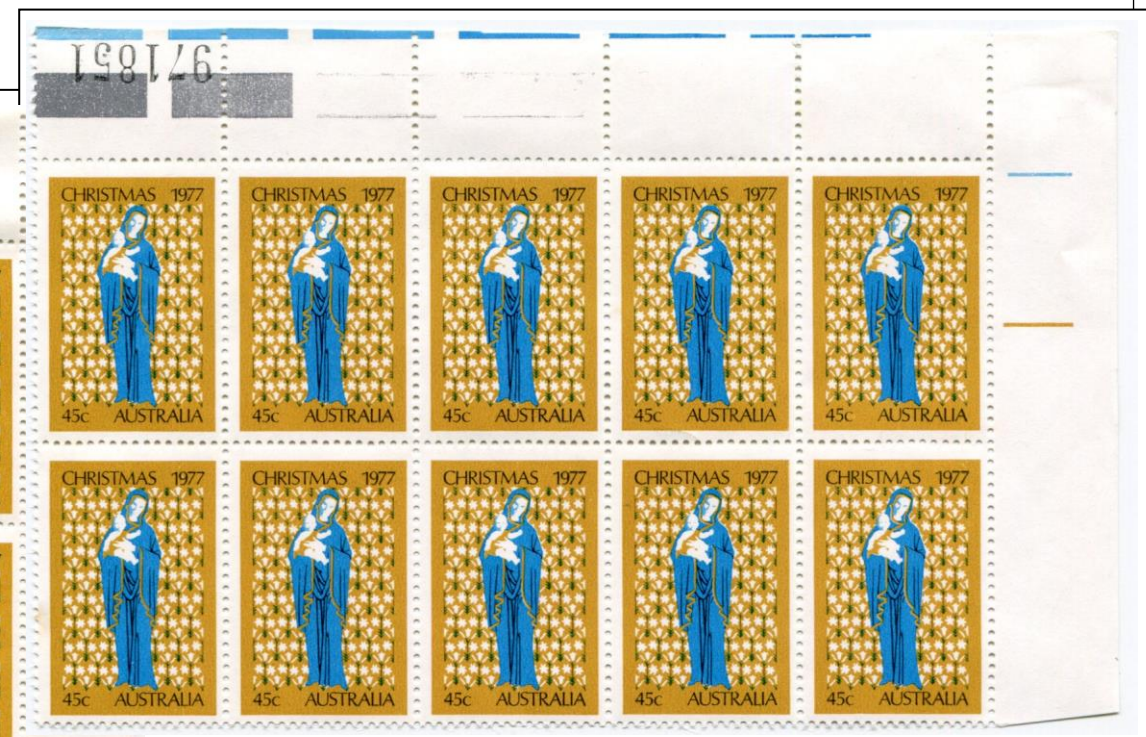
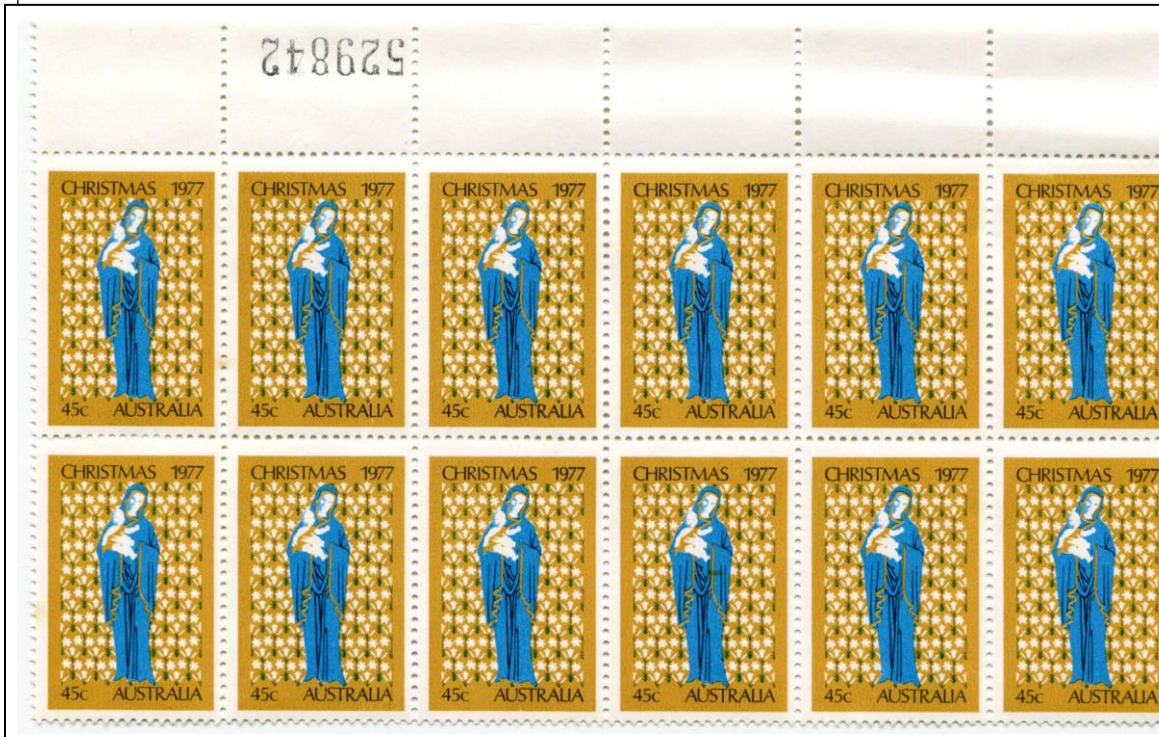
# 45c Christmas 1977 'Madonna and Child' stamp - printing details and constant plate varieties

The printing cylinders for the 45c stamps were 100-on, and issued to post offices in sheets with upper and lower panes of 50 stamps, having 5 horizontal rows of 10 stamps, separated by a stamp width gutter with tonal wedges of the 3 colours used for printing: buff-ochre, light blue and black. The panes were serially numbered (inverted) in black, in the top selvedge above stamp 6/1 in the upper pane, and in the gutter above stamp 6/1 in the lower pane.

The two varieties below are recorded by McCleary, not by the ACSC.

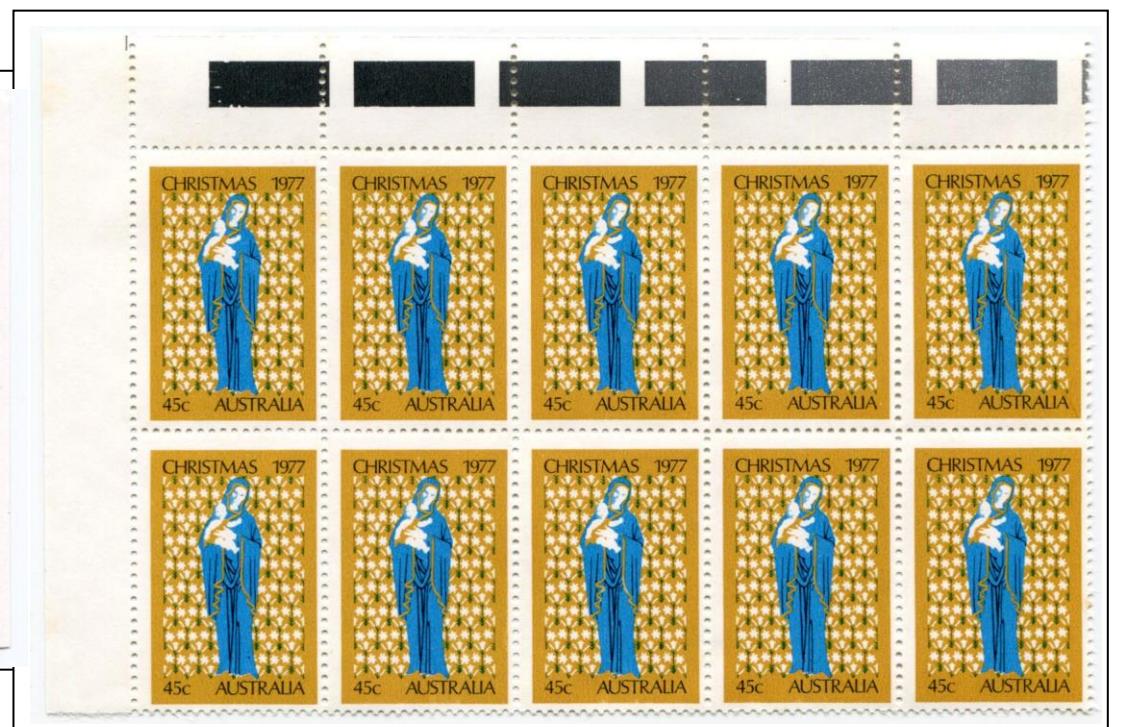
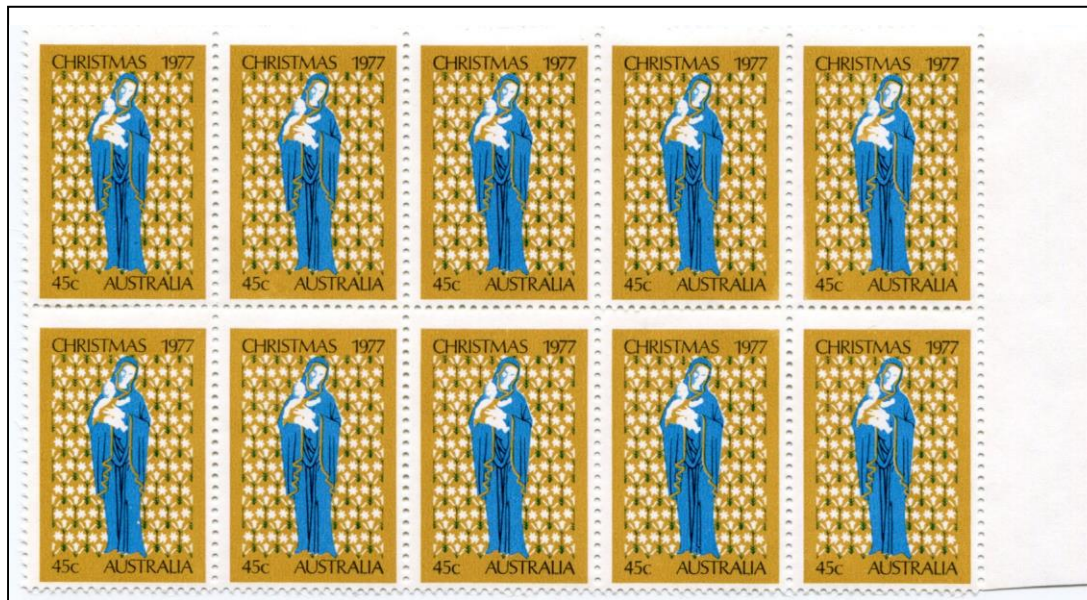
Lower Pane, 1/10 - retouch around 45c

Upper Pane, 1/10 - weakness over HR of CHRISTMAS



Lower Pane, 2/2, 2/3, 2/4 - all have various weakness in ochre colour under 45c and AUSTRALIA

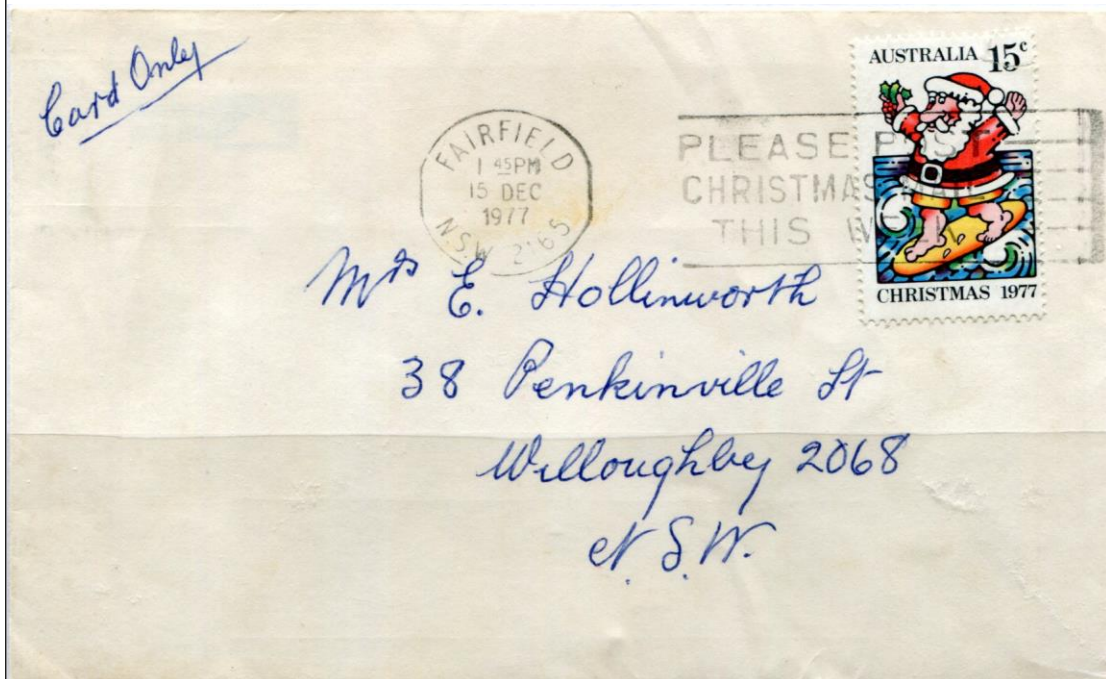
Lower Pane, 3/7 - large retouch around 45c



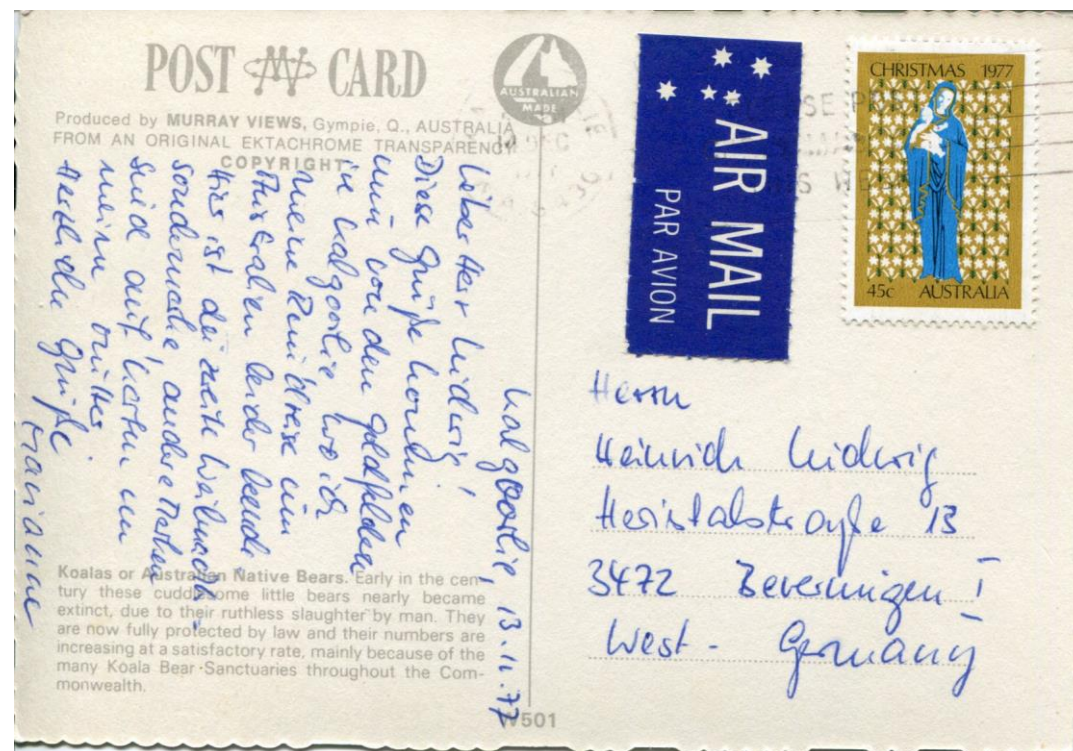
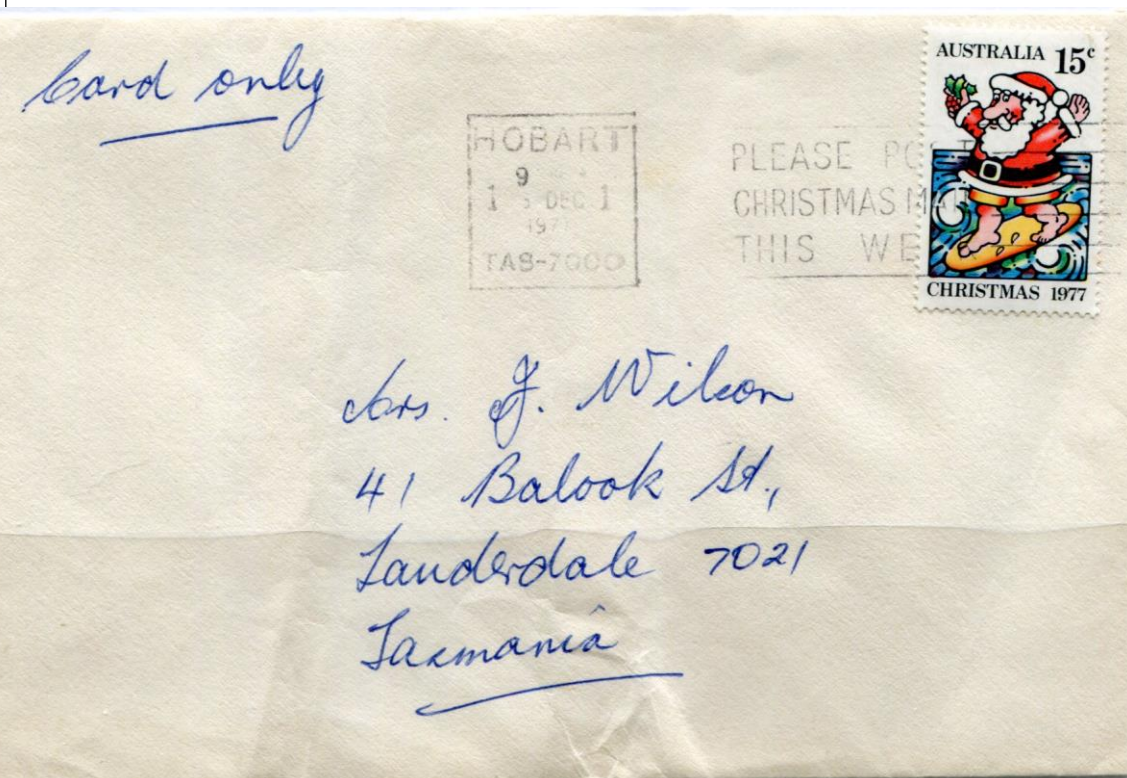


## Christmas 1977 stamps - solo use on mail

The 15c stamp paid the 15c concession rate for cards posted for delivery within Australia. This rate only applied from 1 November to 31 December 1977, for a card in a standard size envelope marked 'Card only'.



The 45c stamp paid the air mail to Zone 5, including Europe and the United Kingdom. This was the region where the majority of mail was addressed in the pre-Christmas period. The rate applied to mail weighing up to 10g in weight. Mail weighing 10g - 20g was double rate, 90c.





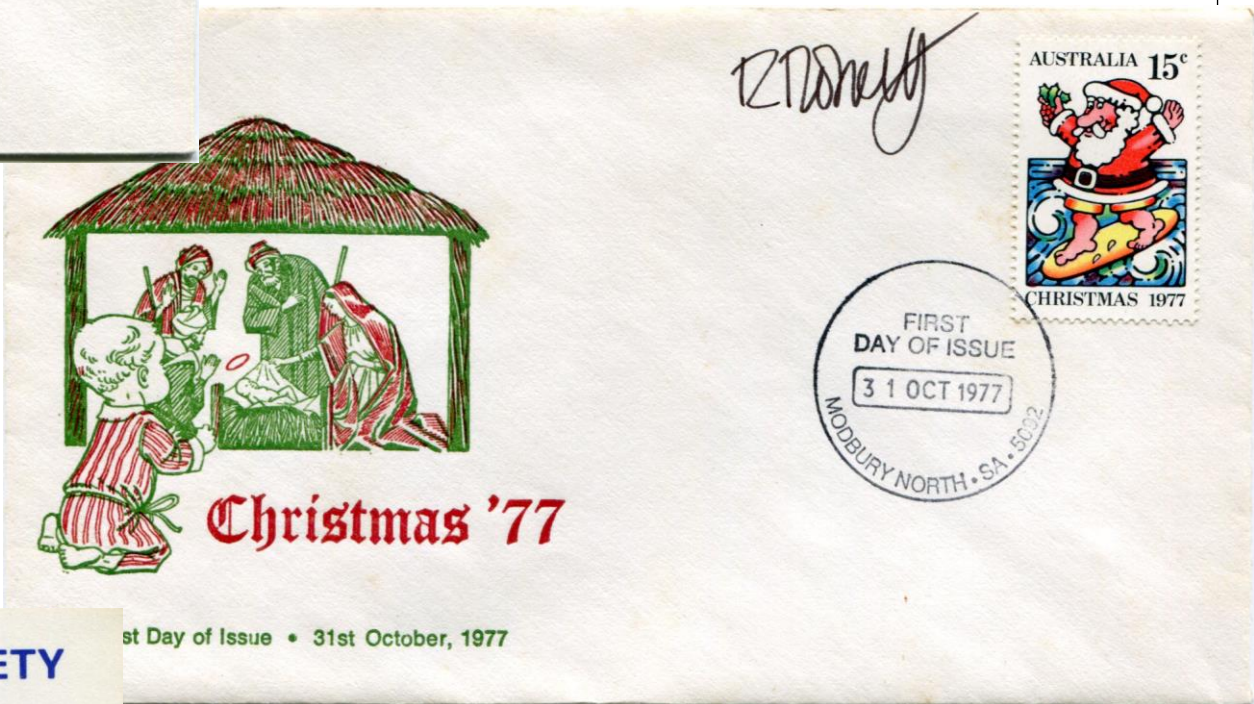
Christmas 1977 stamps - philatelic covers and souvenirs



Private cover overpaying the 45c air mail rate to Europe, but franked with the pair of Christmas stamps. Date is 2 November 1977, three days after issue.

Serviced Australia Post first day cover. Such covers were available at all major post offices on the day of issue for 72c, being 12c for the unserviced cover and 60c for the stamps.

Souvenir card produced by the Gold Coast Philatelic Society as a souvenir of Stamp Day, Sunday 15 January 1978.



Wesley Cover Service first day cover signed by the designer Roger Roberts, who lived in Adelaide. The first day cancel is Modbury North, the closest post office to his home.

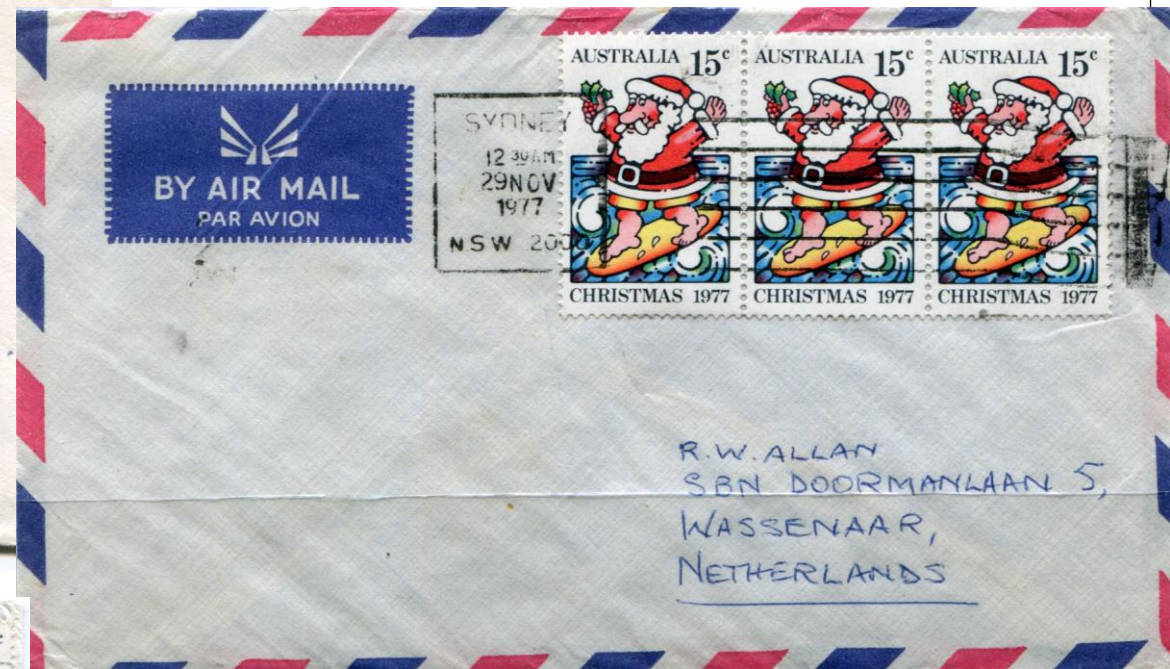




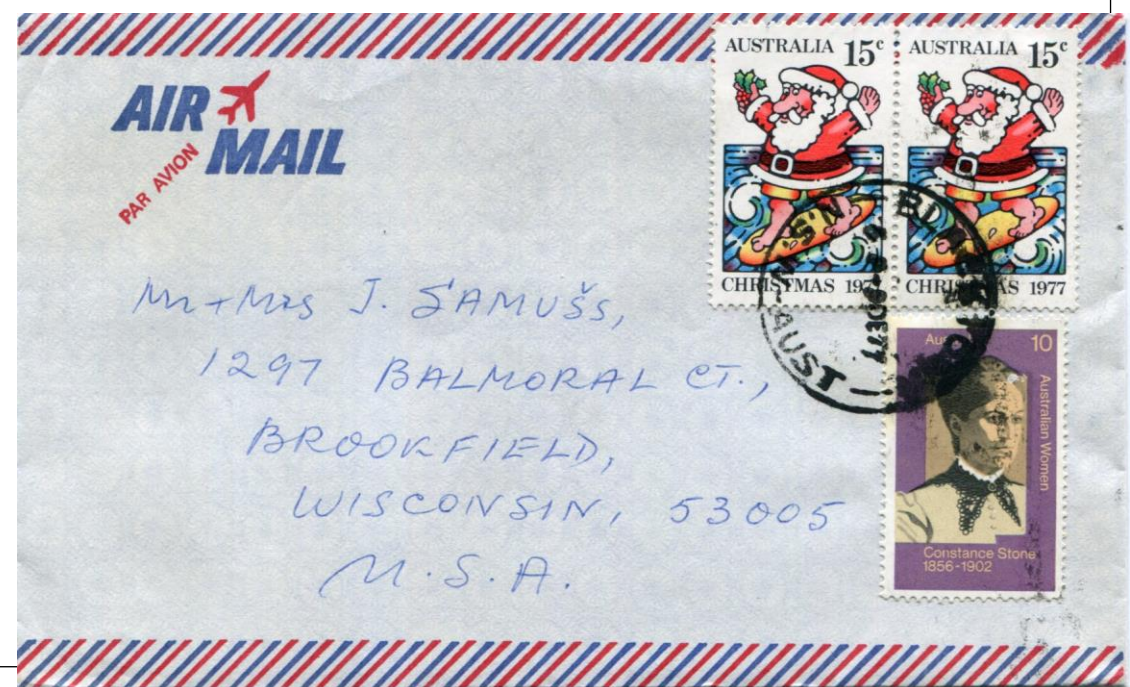
15c Christmas 1977 Surfing Santa' stamp - used as a make-up value - to overseas destinations



Air mail to a Zone 5 country, such as England and Europe, was 45c. Three 15c stamps paid this rate. Cover at left is a 'tourist envelope', cover below is commercial.



The airmail rate to North America (Zone 4) was 40c.



The 'Printed papers, Books and Greeting Card' rate, to all overseas countries, surface mail, was 20c. For this rate the envelope had to be unsealed and contain "no more than five words of greeting".



15c Christmas 1977 'Surfing Santa' stamp - used as a make-up value

- Used to make-up the following postage:
- triple letter rate \$1.35 (45c per 10g) to Europe, postmarked Hobart 17 December 1977;
  - \$1.35 to Greece (90c express delivery & 45c per 10g airmail to Europe), dated 3 January 1978;
  - 70c air mail (35c per 10g) to Hawaii, postmarked 24 November 1977;
  - \$3.00 parcel rate (up to 5kg, to an adjoining state), date unclear.



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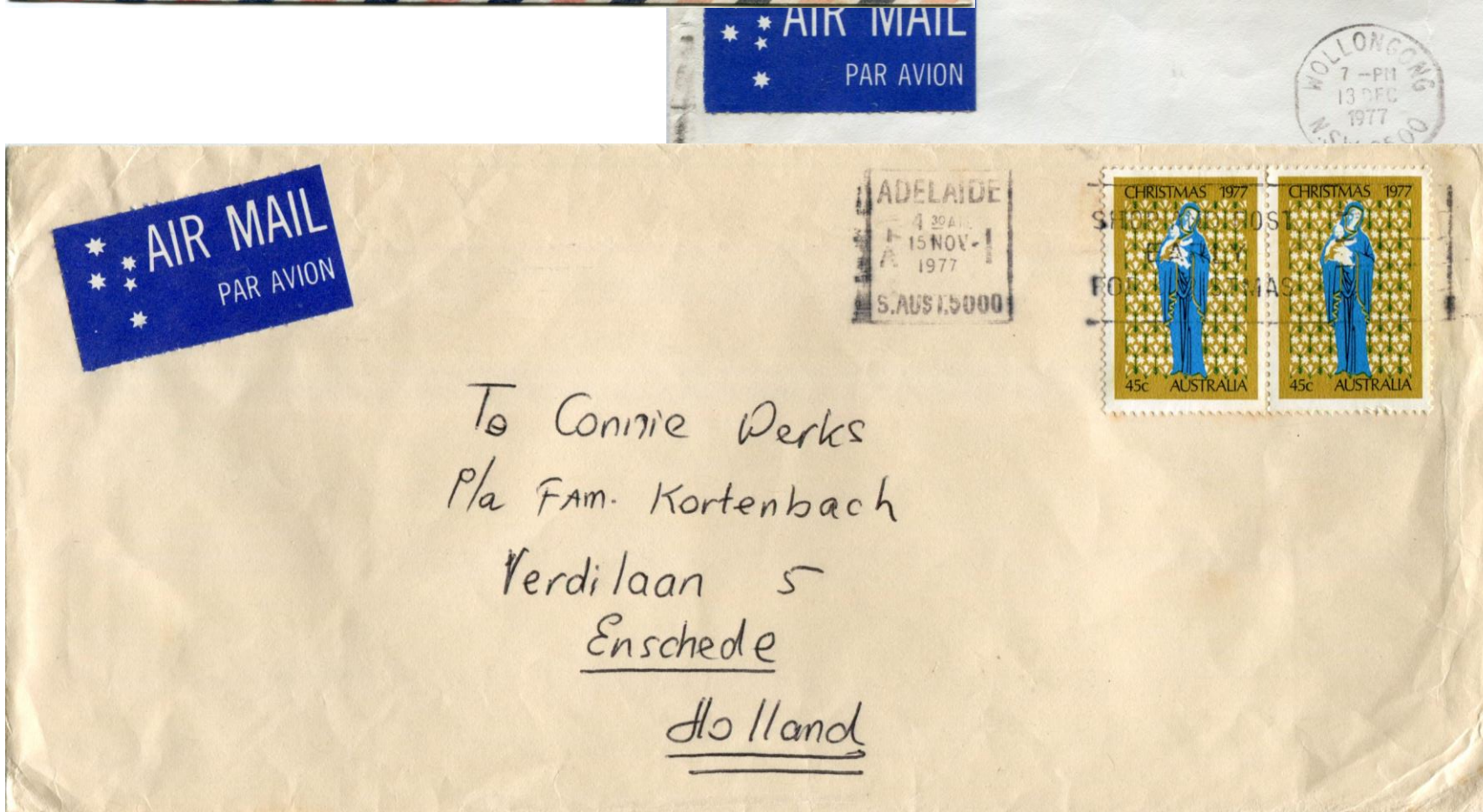


*Κύριος  
29/1/78  
Iwarrin Kapatstua  
Πριμυθοντιαν 27  
Ευδεγίς Ευαφών T.T. 824  
ATHENS-GREECE*



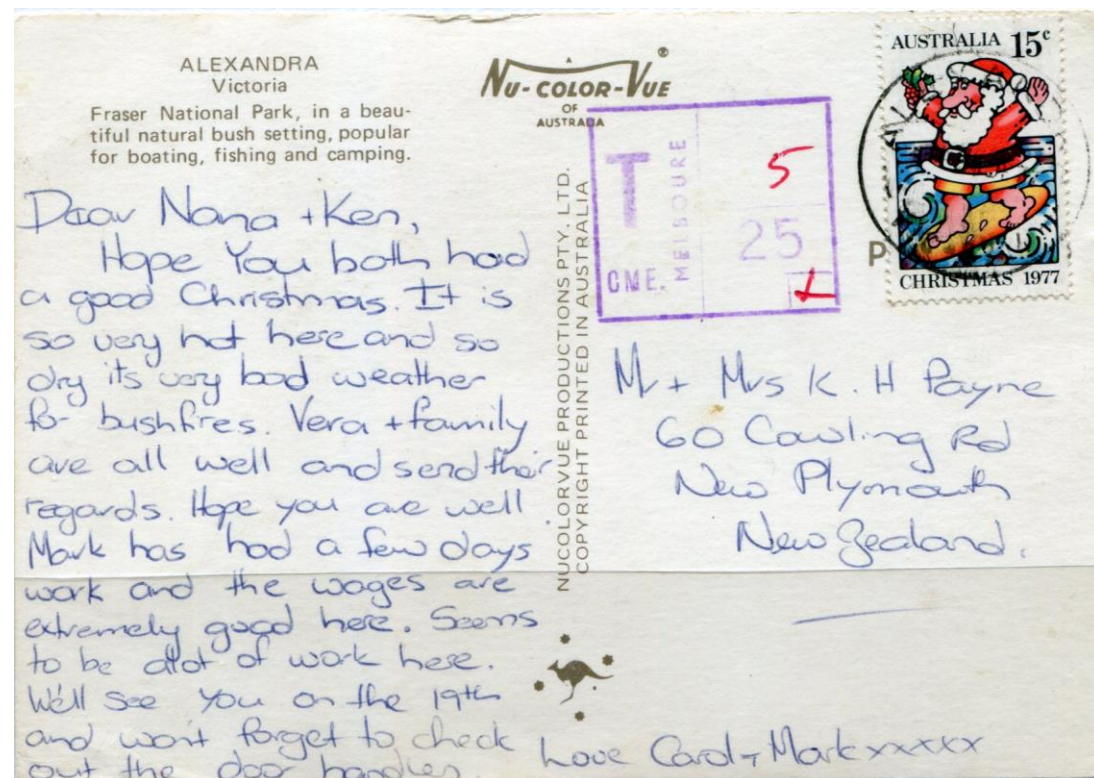
45c Christmas 1977 'Madonna and Child' stamp - air mail covers to Europe

Airmail rate to Europe was 45c for letters weighing 0-10g, and 90c for letters weighing 10-20g.





## Mail with instructional markings



The 15c stamp has underpaid the 20c postcard rate to New Zealand. There was no Christmas concession postage to New Zealand and Oceania.

Cover below was addressed to a man who had died, had the 'pointing finger' hand stamp applied, then returned to the sender whose name and address is on the back of the envelope.



Cover cancelled Adelaide, 11 January 1978, with three 15c 'Surfing Santa' stamps paying the 45c air mail rate to Europe.

During sorting, the cover was found to be overweight (in excess of 10g) for the 45c postage paid. The 'Tax Officer' at the GPO added the 45c deficit in postage. This was a 45c 'Madonna and Child' stamp, dated and postmarked 4.30AM 12 January 1978, with the code number 28.

The additional postage was collected by sending a 'More to Pay' card to the sender, whose name and address appears on the reverse of the envelope. Such a card reads, in part, "Rather than delay your air mail letter, Australia Post has applied the correct amount of postage and sent your letter. Please pay the deficient postage using this card".





## 15c Christmas 1977 'Surfing Santa' stamp - using old stocks

After the Christmas period, the 15c concession rate no longer applied, and some Post Offices had stocks of Christmas stamps still to be used. Many of the 15c 'Surfing Santa' stamps were used as make-up values on parcels, registered articles and payments for services such as mail redirection.

This registered commercial cover front has been postmarked at Oatley, NSW, dated 3 February 1978. It has seventeen 15c 'Surfing Santa' stamps (a block of 15 and a pair), with a 5c stamp, paying postage of \$2.60. This pays the registration fee of \$2.00 and 60c postage for a non-standard article weighing between 250g and 500g.





15c Christmas 1977  
'Surfing Santa' stamp -  
used to make-up higher  
postal rates

The top cover (230 mm x 154  
mm), postmarked Valley View, SA,  
dated 15 November 1977.

Total postage consists of \$2.00  
registration fee and 30c postage  
for a non-standard article 50g -  
100g. Note the low registration  
number. Stamps are from the  
second red cylinder, with  
particularly red legs and hands.



THE BRITISH PASSPORT OFFICER,  
BOX 15, P.O.,  
CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.



The Registrar General,  
Prince Albert Road,  
Sydney 2000



This registered commercial cover front (354 mm x 152 mm), is postmarked East  
Maitland dated 26 May 1978.

Total postage paid consists of \$2.00 registration fee and 60c postage for a non-  
standard article 250g - 500g.

The block of 4 'Surfing Santa' stamps is from Sheet C, right pane, top right corner  
(stamps 1/9, 1/10, 2/9, 2/10). They show the variety "pink area at right opposite belt",  
the variety stamp (corner stamp) and normal are arrowed.



15c Christmas 1977 'Surfing Santa' stamp - used to make-up higher postal rates - large envelope

This large envelope has been slightly trimmed (original size 352 mm long by 2215 mm high), postmarked Woonona NSW 2 December 1977, postage pays \$2.00 registration fee and 30 c for non-standard article weighing between 50 g and 100 g.

