

**COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS 1987 PICTORIAL AEROGRAMMES**

Ian McMahon

Up until the late 1970s, Australian definitive postal stationery was utilitarian in design, with a stamp depicting the monarch and the necessary headings. Up until 1981, definitive aerogrammes issued by Australia were utilitarian in design, with a stamp depicting the monarch and the necessary headings, folding instructions and lines for addresses. Commencing in 1981, Australia began issuing 'pictorial' aerogrammes with pictorial panels on the front of the aerogrammes. The first was issued on 21 January 1981 with the issue of a 33c aerogrammes with a view of a 'mob of sheep' on the front of the aerogramme.



Singapore aerogramme postmarked 'Cocos Island'



Australian aerogramme cancelled 'Cocos Island'



Formular aerogramme used from Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 1972

Although Cocos (Keeling) Islands at various times in its history used Singapore (1952-1955) and Australian stamped and formular aerogrammes (from 23 November 1955), until 1987 the Islands had issued no stamped aerogrammes.

On 18 February 1986, a new philatelic officer, David Jackson, arrived on the Islands to take up the position from 19 February 1986. As a new philatelic officer, he had a number of ideas for changes to the function of the philatelic office and on the Islands' stamp issuing program writing on 14 April 1986 to the Islands' Administrator with proposals for some changes in the function of the Office and copy of a Five-Year Stamp Program. Included in these proposals was a proposal for the issuing of aerogrammes: *I have been giving some consideration to introducing Aerogrammes into the Cocos (Keeling) Islands postal system. Subject to cost of production I should like four definitive Aerogrammes showing scenes and Malay culture. Production costs and lead time are currently being investigated.*

His investigation of the production costs of the aerogrammes had begun by writing to R Gamble of Philatelic Consulting Services Toorak on 8 April 1986: *I have been giving some consideration to introducing some form of postal stationery. At this time, I favour Aerograms and propose to introduce four, with scenes of Cocos. These would be definitive, to be replaced on a three-year basis by issuing four at one time we will be able to reduce set-up costs, and to a great extent cover the costs of fulfilling mail orders.*

*I believe this to be justified in postal terms by the sale, through the Post Office, of up to one hundred blank aerograms per month to residents, and up to four hundred per month during yachting season. Would you please find out some costing. I would initially look at 20,000 of each design. Aerograms would be required to be pre-folded. I would like your opinion of the time required to set production in motion.*

*I suggest we commission Mark Todd to do the artwork. I have used Mark for souvenir covers in Victoria and have a very high regard for his work. He knows Australia Post guidelines and I am sure the cost will be very reasonable. I have, of course, not made any overtures to him as you may have other thoughts. ....*

It is worth noting that he justifies the issuing of stamped aerogrammes by the comment that the Post Office sold up to one hundred formular aerogrammes per month to residents, and up to four hundred per month during yachting season. (The Tradewinds season of June to October is the yachting season. During this time Direction Island, which is otherwise uninhabited, becomes a haven for international yacht travellers.) Which formular aerogramme was being sold by the Post Office is unknown. If you have a used example from this period please advise the author.

The first quote obtained for printing the aerogrammes came from Cambec Web and was dated 17 June 1986. The quote was for \$3,035 for 10,000 aerogrammes or 30.35 cents each, not including 'artwork, freight, postage, handing, consultancy fee' and was rejected as 'financially not viable'. The quote was on the basis of the following specifications:

- Description: AEROGRAMMES
- Quantity: 10,000
- Size: 322mm x 215mm, Folded to 100 mm x 205mm
- Colours: Printed 4 colours one side and gummed three flaps, die cut to shape, supplied folded with flaps folded in.
- Delivery: Banded in 50's in cartons of 200

Mercury Walsh sent a quote on 7 July 1986:

QUOTATION 358/38

**MERCURY-WALCH**  
A DIVISION OF DAVIES BROTHERS LIMITED

HEAD OFFICE AND PLANT: 57 BOWEN ROAD MOONAH TASMANIA 7009  
TELEPHONE 28 0281      POSTAL ADDRESS P.O. BOX 220 MOONAH 7009  
TELEGRAMS MERWAL HOBART      TELEX HOBART 4437051

10th July, 1986

Cocos Philatelic Bureau  
Post Office  
Cocos (Keeling) Island  
INDIAN OCEAN 6799

Attention: Mr. David Jackson      c.c. Mr. Bob Gamble

Dear Sir,

We are pleased to submit our quotation as follows:

**PICTORIAL AEROGRAMMES - Cocos (Keeling) Islands**

**Size:** 205 x 327.5mm flat - as A/Post (3 designs)

**Description**  
Printed litho offset four colour process (background colour from four process colours if required). Die cut to shape, gummed and folded on airletter machine. Band in 50's, pack in cartons of 1,000's and overpack in 2,000's.

**Material**  
Aerogramme White 65gsm

**Origination**  
Client to supply line art and reflection art or transparency for pictorial area

**Price**  
60,000 (20,000 x 3) ... \$ 55.50 M EX WORKS  
Colour seps. & Prepwork \$1,500.00 approx.  
PLUS SALES TAX, IF APPLICABLE.

N.B. This quotation is subject to the conditions at left, except the quoted prices are firm for a limit of 30 days and the price is subject to the sighting of final artwork and original copy.

Yours faithfully,

**MERCURY-WALCH**  
The member of our staff handling your enquiry is Mr. J. T. Hey

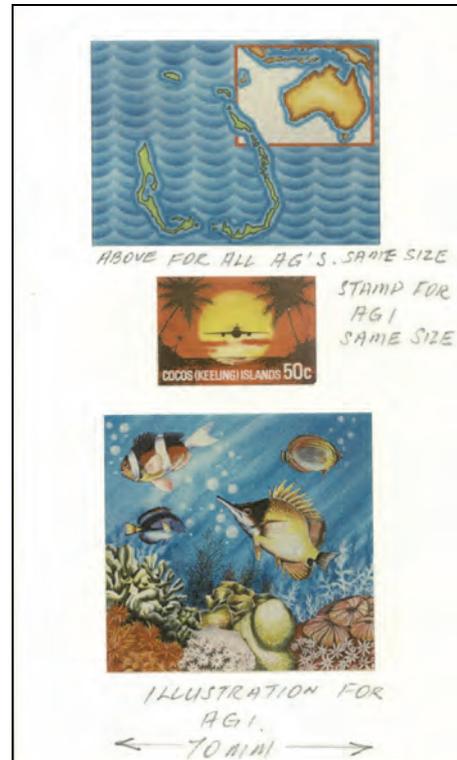
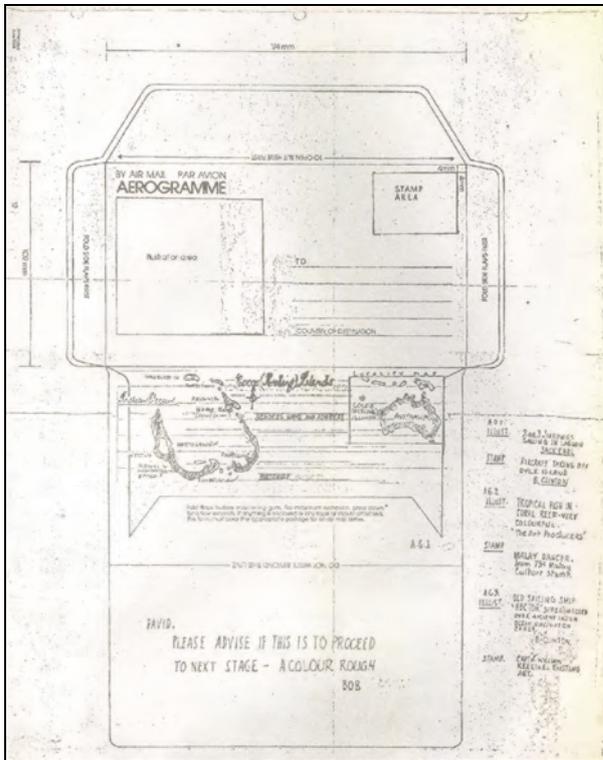
SALES TAX IS APPLICABLE, AT ADDITIONAL TO THE PRICE QUOTED

*Postal Stationery Collector*

- For a single design
- Size: 205 x 327.5mm flat as A/Post
- Printed: litho offset four colour process. (Background colour from four process colours if required). Die cut to shape, gummed and folded on airletter machine. Band in SO's pack in cartons of 1000s and overpack in 2,000's.
- Paper: Aerogramme White 65gsm
- Origination: Client to supply line art and reflection art or transparency for pictorial area.
- Price 10,000 \$101.85 per thousand
- Colour separations and prepwork \$825.00 approx.
- Price is subject to the sighting of final artwork and original copy.

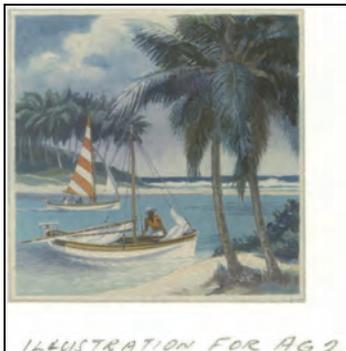
This quote was only for a single design whereas the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Post Office had decided to produce aerogrammes in three designs, so a revised quote for three different designs was provided by Mercury Walsh on 10 July 1986:

- Size: 205 x 327.5 mm flat- as Australia Post (3 designs)
- Description: Printed litho offset four colour process (background colour from four process colours if required). Die cut to shape, gummed and folded on airletter machine. Band in 50's, pack in cartons of 1,000's and overpack in 2,000's.
- Material: Aerogramme White 65gsm
- Origination: Client to supply line art and reflection art or transparency for pictorial area
- Price 60,000 (20,000 x 3) \$55.50 per thousand
- EX WORKS Colour separations & Prepwork \$1,500.00 approx.



*Mock-up of the layout of the aerogrammes sent to the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Philatelic Bureau on 9 September 1986 by Robert Gamble. Two earlier mock-ups are shown on the inside back cover.*

*Artwork for the reverse of all three aerogrammes and the stamp area and pictorial panel for AG 1*



*Artwork for pictorial panel for AG 2*

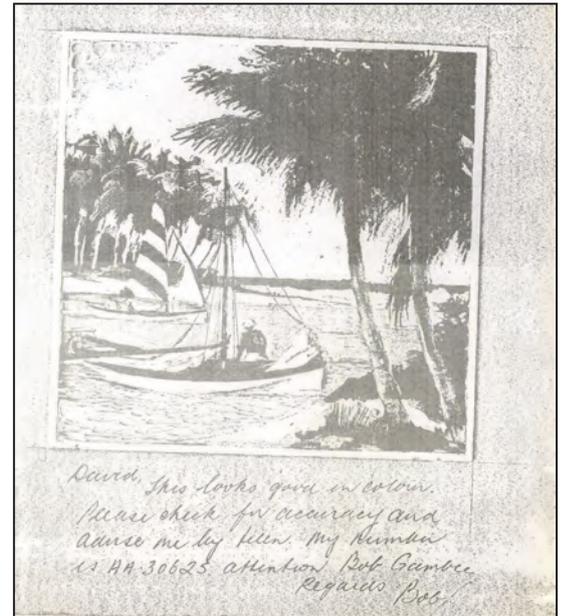


*Artwork for stamp for AG 2*



*Artwork for pictorial panel and stamp for AG 3*

The designs for the proposed aerogrammes were AG 1 Aircraft flying into the tropical sun; AG 2 Malay dancer and AG 3 Captain William Keeling. The artists commissioned to prepare the designs were AG 1 Tom Bland, AG 2 Jack Earle and AG 3 Brian Clinton. Illustrated above is a mock-up of the layout of the aerogrammes (faxed to the Post Office by Bob Gamble on 9 September 1986) and artwork for the stamp areas, pictorial panels and for the reverse of the aerogrammes. Two further layout mock-ups and proofs of AG1, with and without the inscriptions are shown on the inside back cover.



On 30 September 1986 Jack Earl wrote to the Post Office acknowledging payment of \$2,300 for artwork for the aerogramme (AG2) and commented that he was glad you liked the roughs Gamble sending them up so I can work on finished artwork. On 27 November Jack Earl received a further \$500 for his artwork. On 2 December 1986, \$800 for aerogramme artwork (AG 3) was paid to Brian Clinton.

On 17 Dec 1986, the Post Office telexed Bob Gamble saying that the artwork had arrived please go ahead with production congratulations on a top job. On 21st January 1987 Mercury Walsh wrote to David Jackson to say that they had safely received the artwork from Bob Gamble and were proceeding with the preparatory work. They noted that the artwork was far more complex than originally quoted: as they had based our quotation on 3 multicoloured pictorial areas and the stamps from line artwork. There are now a total of 8 colour separations for the 3 designs and the total prepwork estimate is now \$2,200 not \$1,500 as quoted. They commented that the artwork is particularly attractive and should produce a superior set of aerogrammes. David Jackson replied on 3rd February 1987 that the revised prepwork estimate of \$2,200 was fine and that "I am sure you are right we will end up with a very attractive set of aerogrammes". Bob Gamble annotated a proof of the artwork for the pictorial panel for AG 2 (right): *David This looks good in colour. Please check for accuracy and advise me by telex ....*

In this period pictorial aerogrammes were becoming popular and were the subject of a series of articles in the Australian Stamp Monthly in 1986 and 1987 and other Journals by Bill Maye who had some correspondence with the philatelic bureau on the aerogramme and the relevance of the designs to the Cocos Islands. David Jackson wrote on 27 January 1987 that he had read Bill Maye's article in the November 1986 issue of the Australian Stamp Monthly and that *The Philatelic Bureau has a firm policy that all issued material will have some association with Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and so these aerogrammes will show parts of Cocos and its history.*

On 16 March 1987 Mercury Walsh wrote to Mr Jackson to say that they had despatched by Australian Airlines Airfreight 20 cartons of aerogrammes to Cocos as follows:

- Design AG1 - 6 cartons each 2,000 - 12,000
- Design AG2 - 6 cartons each 2,000 - 12 000 /
- Design AG3 - 6. cartons each 2,000 - 12,000 /
- Design AG1/2 - 1 mixed carton of 1,000 each- 2,000
- Design AG2/3 - 1 mixed carton of 1,850 AG3 and 250 AG2- 2,100
- TOTAL 40,100
- To Australia Post, Melbourne 6,000 each design 18,000
- To CAPC, U.S. - 250 each design 750
- To Harry Allen, U.K. - 1,000 each design 3,000
- TOTAL ORDER 61,850

On 16th March, Mercury Walsh telexed Australia Post saying that they were *Sending To You Today Per Ansett Airfreight 9 Cartons Of Cocos Keeling Island Pictorial Aerogrammes. Packed As 3 Cartons of each design TOTAL 18,000 AEROGRAMMES.* They also wrote to Crown Agents Philatelic Corp USA saying that they had on that date sent 750 (250 each of 3 designs) Cocos (Keeling) Island Pictorial Aerogrammes per Air Parcel Post to the above address and to Mr H Allen, Cocos (Keeling) Islands Stamp Bureau, UK, saying that they would despatch per Ansett Airfreight 3,000 (1,000 each of 3 designs) Cocos (Keeling) Island Pictorial aerogrammes.

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands Philatelic Bureau placed advertisements in the Australian Stamp Monthly and Stamp News in July 1987. The text of the advertisement provides an excellent description of the aerogrammes:

*Be in at the beginning*

*COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS first ever AEROGRAMMES First day of issue 29 July 1987.*

*For the first time in its interesting history Cocos (Keeling) Islands will issue a set of three (3) pictorial aerogrammes. These superbly illustrated aerogrammes are printed in four colours and depict the history, marine life and the unique sailing craft of the Cocos Malay people. Great Philatelic interest is being generated by pictorial aerogrammes, so here is your opportunity to start a collection with the beautiful Cocos aerogrammes - the very first ever produced by this Indian Ocean tropical coral atoll.*

*AG1 features the marine life found in the tropical lagoon of Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Colorful and authentic they are shown with examples of coral found in the*

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AG2 depicts Cocos Malay sailing craft known as JUKONGS, peculiar to the Cocos Malay people. The artist is Jack Earl of Sydney, one of Australia's foremost marine artists. The stamp shows a Malay dancer in colourful traditional costume.

AG3 reproduces an old map of about circa 1856 showing the position of Cocos (Keeling) Islands in relation to New Holland (Australia). The stamp shows Captain William Keeling, who is claimed, discovered the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 1802. The artist is Brian Clinton, one of Melbourne's leading commercial artists.

The three aerogrammes were printed by Mercury Walsh, Hobart, Tasmania by photolithography on aerogramme white 65 gram paper for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Postal Administration.

The cost of these very first Cocos (Keeling) Islands aerogrammes is just 50c each. Stocks are limited to a relatively small print run to buy from Australia Post or direct from the Philatelic Bureau (see below). Do not miss these beautiful aerogrammes they are the very first ever produced by this Indian Ocean tropical coral atoll.

**BE SURE YOU GET THESE FIRST AEROGRAMMES FROM AUSTRALIA POST PHILATELIC SALES CENTRES OR**

Send Postal Money Order, Bank Cheque, Personal Cheque or Credit Card details to:	Philatelic Bureau COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS INDIAN OCEAN 6799	Full Name .....	Address .....	Postcode .....	Please debit my credit card for the amount of SA .....	
Philatelic Bureau COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS INDIAN OCEAN 6799	Account No. ....	Cardholder's Signature .....	Expiry Date / /	Mint (No.)	C.T.O. (No.)	F.D.I. (No.)
	My requirements are:					
	AG1 MARINE LIFE 50c ea					
	AG2 JUKONGS 50c ea					
	AG3 OLD CHART 50c ea					

**PHILATELIC BUREAU**  
**\* COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS \* INDIAN OCEAN 6799**

The Australian Stamp Monthly, July, 1987

area. The stamp depicts an aircraft flying into the tropical sun. The artist is Tom Bland of Melbourne.

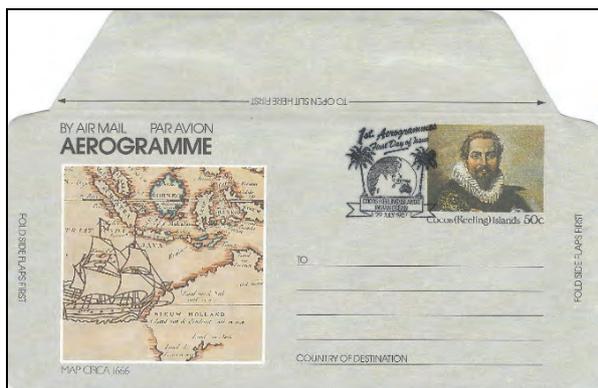
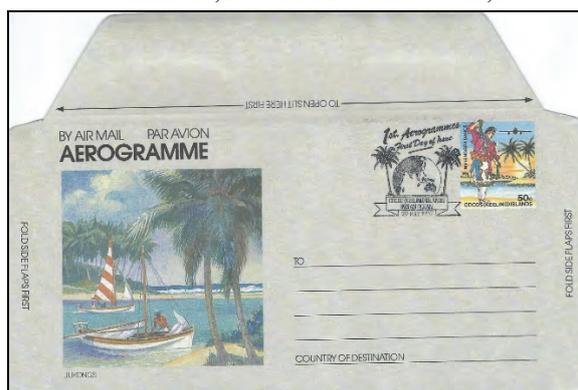
AG2 depicts Cocos Malay sailing craft known as JUKONGS, peculiar to the Cocos Malay people. The artist is Jack Earl of Sydney, one of Australia's foremost marine artists. The stamp shows a Malay dancer in colourful traditional costume.

AG3 Reproduces an old map or chart circa 1666 showing the position of Cocos (Keeling) Islands in relation to New Holland (Australia). The stamp shows Captain William Keeling, who it is claimed, discovered the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 1609. [Captain William Keeling of the [British] East India Company is believed to have discovered the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in 1609 as he was returning home from Banda to England.] The artist is Brian Clinton, one of Melbourne's leading commercial artists.

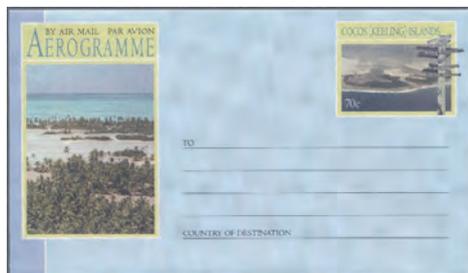
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The cost of these very first Cocos (Keeling) Islands aerogrammes is just 50c each. Stocks are limited to a relatively small print run so buy yours from Australia Post or order from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Philatelic Bureau now! Do not miss these beautiful aerogrammes they will enhance your collection. First day of issue copies can only be ordered from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Philatelic Bureau

On 29 July 1987, Cocos (Keeling) Islands issued the three 50c pictorial aerogrammes: AG 1 Aircraft flying into the tropical sun; AG 2 Malay dancer and AG 3 Captain William Keeling. The quantities produced were: AG1 20,250 AG2 20500 AG3 21,100.



The second, and last, issue of Cocos (Keeling) Islands aerogrammes was issued on 26 February 1992. The set of three 70c pictorial aerogrammes were designed by Sandra Harman from photographs supplied by Cocos resident, Joanna Smith and were also printed by Mercury-Walsh Hobart: A4 Aerial View of Cocos Keeling Islands with signpost superimposed, pictorial panel coconut palm and beach; A5 Aerial View of Cocos Keeling Islands with signpost superimposed, pictorial panel aerial view of lagoon and A6 Aerial View of Cocos Keeling Islands with signpost superimposed, pictorial panel Coconut palms against sunset sky

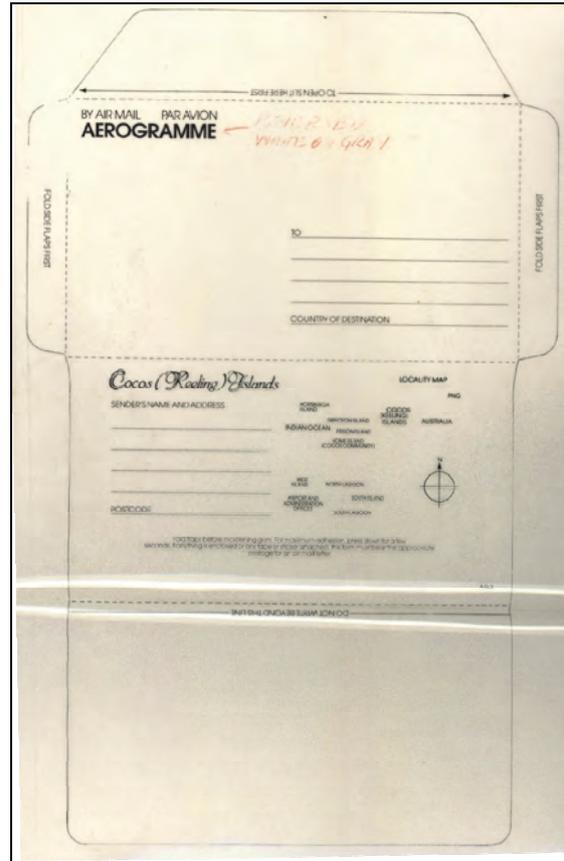
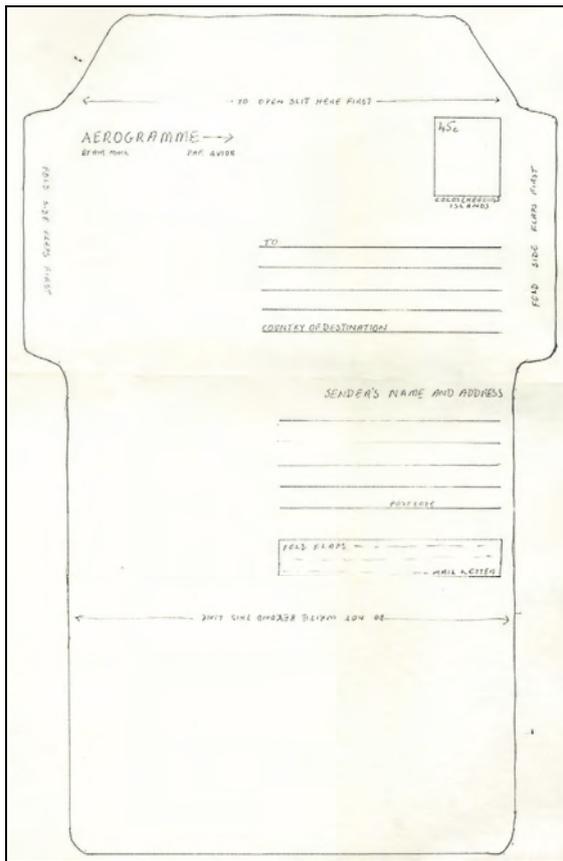


From 1 January 1994, Australia Post took over the running of the Cocos (Keeling) Island postal services. From that time Australian stamped aerogrammes would have been valid for use on Cocos (Keeling) Island.

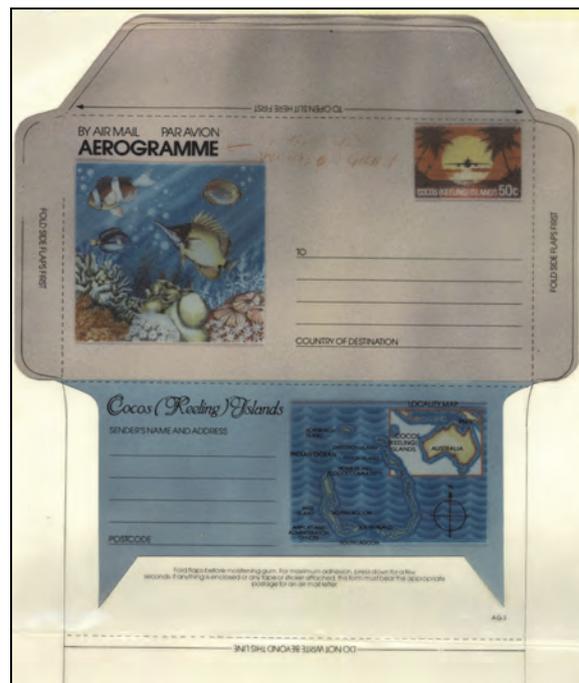
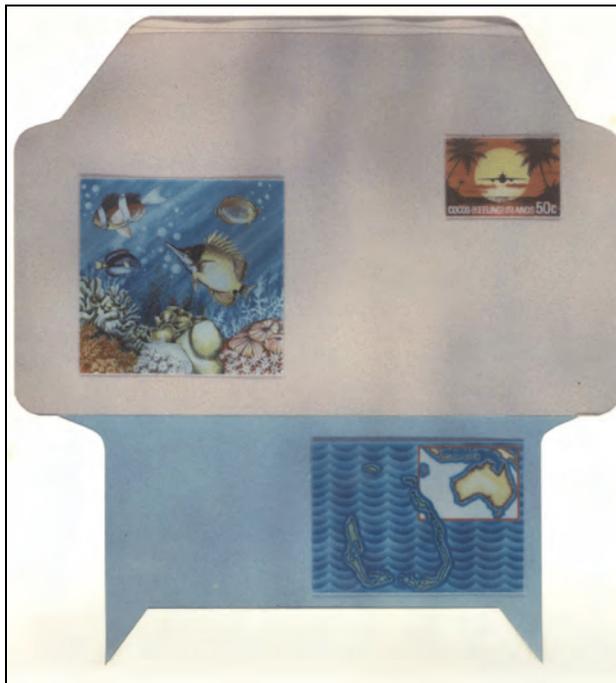
#### References

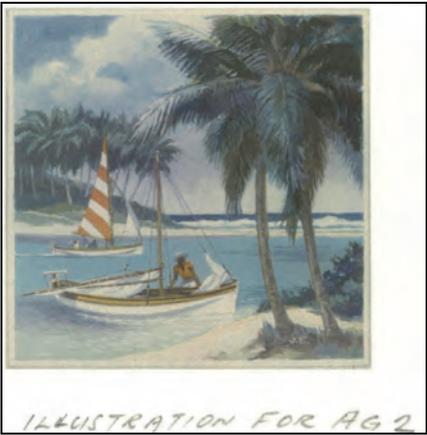
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Bill Maye, articles and advertisements on pictorial aerogrammes in *The Australian Stamp Monthly*, July 1986, November 1986, June 1987 (including a report on the Cocos (Keeling) Island aerogrammes).



Illustrated above are two mock-ups of the layout of the Cocos (Keeling) Island 1987 aerogrammes based on the Australia 1985 45c aerogramme depicting an Emu and an Australian formular aerogramme (approval No. W37). Illustrated below are two proofs of AGI, with and without the inscriptions



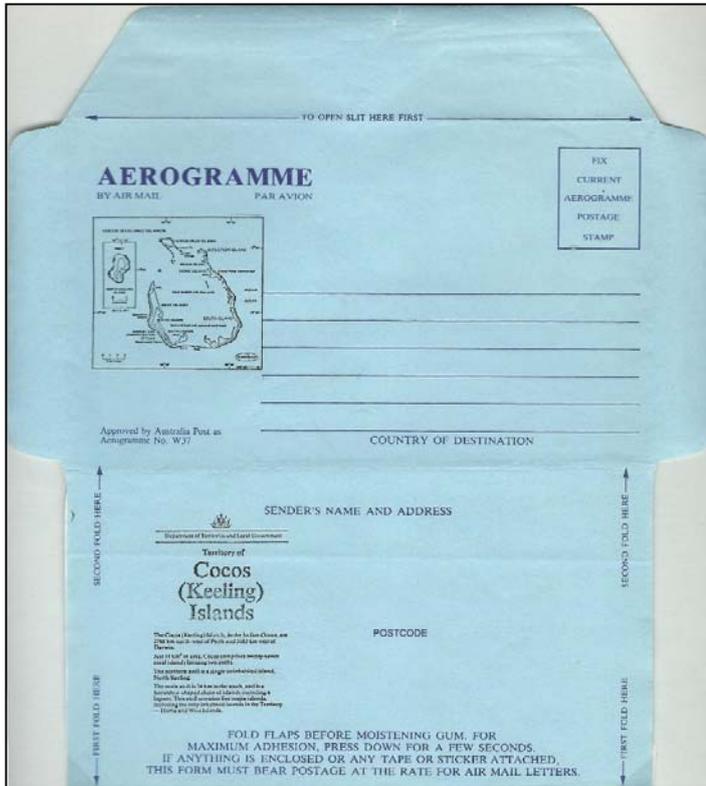


## COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS AND CHRISTMAS ISLAND AEROGRAMMES: AN UPDATE

Ian McMahon

### Cocos (Keeling) Islands Formular aerogramme

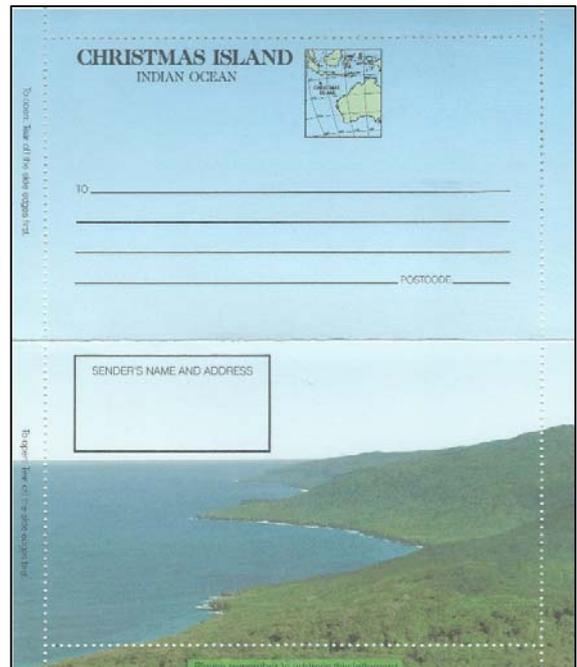
My article on Cocos (Keeling) Islands 1987 Pictorial aerogrammes in the November 2019 issue of the *PSC* made mention of a formula aerogramme being sold at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands Post Office before the issue of the pictorial aerogrammes with the issue of these aerogrammes being in part justified by the number of formular aerogrammes sold: *I believe this to be justified in postal terms by the sale, through the Post Office, of up to one hundred blank aerograms per month to residents, and up to four hundred per month during yachting season.*



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Judy Kennett replied to the article with a likely candidate for the formular aerogramme, an Australian 'permit' aerogramme, Permit No W37, which has been overprinted for the Territory of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. (Derek Brennan was Philatelic Officer on Cocos from October 1988 to October 1990 and Philatelic Officer on Nauru from August 1986 to September 1988).

Has any of our readers seen a used copy?



### Christmas Island Formular Lettercard

My article on Christmas Island aerogrammes in the February 2020 issue of the *PSC* made mention of a formular lettercard in a letter from Graeme Dennis, Christmas Island Philatelic Officer, to Mercury Walch dated 26 June 1990:

*Will you give me an estimated delivery date of our promotional lettercard, please. I would really like to have this project up and running as early in the new (Financial) year as possible.*

This may be the formular lettercard shown on the right.