What is the Defence Subsidised Mail system?

Keeping in contact with family and friends when members deploy is extremely important. In recognition of this, Defence covers the cost of post to all Australian Forces Post Office (AFPO) for articles that do not exceed 2kg in actual weight or 2kg cubed weight.

What is cubed weight?

Cubic charging applies to all parcels. Australia Post calculates charges for all parcels according to their actual weight or cubic weight equivalent, whichever is greater. Actual weight is how much the item weighs while cubic weight is how much space it takes up. For example a paper weight would have a high actual weight but low cubic weight where as a kite would have a low actual weight but high cubic weight.

If the item that you are posting is over 2kg of cubed weight (how much space it physically takes up) the cost of posting that parcel or item of mail is not covered by Defence and you will be charged postage from the location you are sending the parcel to the international mail departure point in Sydney.

How is Cubic Weight Calculated?

The formula used to determine the cubic weight has been designed by civil industry, not the ADF. It is calculated by measuring and multiplying the length, height and width of the parcel. The result is then multiplied by a cubic weight conversion factor of 250. The formula is as follows:

a. Measure the Length (L), Width (W) and Height (H) of the parcel in meters.

b. Multiply the L by the W and by the H then multiply by 250.
   This is the cubic weight (L x W x H x 250).

For example: a parcel weighing 2kg but measuring 50cm long, 30cm high and 40cm wide: \((0.5m \times 0.3m \times 0.4m) \times 250 = 15kg\)

This parcel now has a cubic weight of 15kg and therefore postage would be assessed on the basis of 15kg despite the actual weight being only 2kg.
How do I keep it simple?

Use of an Australia Post “BM” Mailing Box (mailing box B x 2, L 310 x W 225 x H 102mm) will keep your parcel within the maximum permissible cubic weight and if the actual weight is less than 2kg it will meet the Defence Subsidised Mail freepost criteria.

In general, all parcels must be made-up and packed to a standard that will:

a. prevent injury to the person handling the parcel;
b. prevent the contents escaping and damaging other postal articles;
c. prevent damage to equipment and vehicles, particularly aircraft;
d. protect the contents from loss or damage caused by the stress of handling and carriage; and
e. protect the contents from loss or damage caused by the extremes of climate.

Items that are packaged inappropriately will be returned to the person/s concerned for rectification prior to being dispatched. If you are unsure how to pack an item, advice should be sought through Australia Post.

Why does Defence only subsidise up to a 2kg cubed limit?

All mail forwarded to AFPOs is transported within the same cargo or freight system as the equipment and material that is required by Australian personnel to conduct operations.

The transporting trucks and airplanes have a fixed amount of space and 2kg cubed weight has been determined as the easiest configuration to be managed by deployed ADF postal clerks within the Defence supply system.

*HMAS MANOORA’s embarked Seaking delivers much awaited mail to HMAS TOBRUK in the Arafura Sea during Operation Astute.*
What if my parcel is slightly over the 2kg weight limit?

AUSPOST does not determine weight in part kilograms. Parcels that weigh part kilograms will be rounded up to the nearest full kg. For example, if your parcel weighs 2.2 kg you will be charged for the full 3kg and the postage will not be covered by Defence.

How long will it take for mail to be delivered?

The average time for a parcel to reach its intended destination is two to six weeks however, this can be impacted by several factors including aircraft and vehicle availability in the Operational Area, the need to move priority stores or people or even something as simple as weather.

Express Post only applies until your mail reaches the Australian based mail centre, from there all mail enters the Defence cargo and freight system and is treated the same regardless of ‘express’ status. For example, Platinum Express Post Mail will not get to the Area of Operations any faster than normal mail.
How do I address my letters and parcels?

Parcels should be addressed as per the sample below. The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) will provide you with the correct AFPO number and can be contacted on 1800 801 026.

Example for Operations

PMKeys Number  
Rank  
First Name  
Surname  
Operation Name  
AFPO Number  
Australian Defence Forces  
NSW 2890

Example for Navy Ships

PMKeys Number  
Rank  
First Name  
Surname  
Ship Name  
AFPO Number  
Australian Defence Forces  
NSW 2890
Providing a correct return address is just as important as the address that the letter or parcel is being sent to. Mail that needs to be returned and does not have a clear return address will end up in the Australia Post dead letter office.

Do I need to complete a Customs Declarations Form?

A customs declaration must be attached to all parcels sent to or from an AFPO. Small envelopes, containing items other than letters i.e. computer disks must also have a customs declaration attached. A detailed description of the contents is required when lodging each item. Parcels received without a Customs Declaration Form will be returned to the sender.

Customs Declaration forms can be obtained from all Australia Post Outlets and further information is available on the customs internet site at [www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)
Can I have Online purchases sent directly to an AFPO?

Due to the custom declaration and security requirements mail ordered on line cannot be sent directly to an AFPO and Australia Post will not accept receipt at any of their facilities for couriered goods from online services.

All items ordered on line should be sent to an address in Australia and repackaged in accordance with the 2kg cubed limitations.
Are there prohibited items that I should be aware of?

Certain items must not be posted in the domestic and/or international postal system. This includes items such as Dangerous Goods (DG), items prohibited by the EMS International Courier Regulations and items that are prohibited by individual countries. Individuals who attempt to send any of the prohibited items by mail may be subject to criminal proceedings and or possible disciplinary action. Information on specific country restrictions can be found at www.auspost.com.au or from your local Post Office. The following items should not be sent through the Defence Subsidised Mail System:

- **Perfumery Products** – Australia Post have deemed “Perfumery Products” as a dangerous good and as such they are not to be sent or forwarded through the Defence and Civil Postal Services.

- **Liquid Articles including Perishable items** – The sending of liquid articles is discouraged, however if you must send a liquid product, they must be enclosed in a leak-proof container made of metal, plastic or similar material with secure closures. The outer package must be strong enough to withstand large volumes of weight. Furthermore, the package must contain sawdust; cotton wool or another protective material, to absorb the liquid should the container break. Defence has banned cordial from being sent through the Defence Postal Service.

- **Tobacco** – Tobacco is not to be sent through the Defence Subsidised Mail System.

- **Alcohol** – Alcohol is not to be sent through the Defence Subsidised Mail System.

- **Military equipment** – Any military goods or equipment such as packs, camouflage uniforms and boots are not to be sent through the Defence Subsidised Mail System.

- **Jewellery, Precious metals, stones or watches valued in excess of $150.00** – Under normal circumstances no compensation is payable for the loss or damage of items that have been lodged through the Defence Subsidised Mail System.
Lithium batteries (including Laptops and iPODs) – All lithium batteries are now classified as dangerous goods and cannot be carried by air. Australia Post cannot accept lithium batteries or devices containing lithium batteries for mailing overseas or for domestic air carriage. Parcels containing these items will now only be transported within Australia and by road only. If Lithium is detected in any parcels they will be returned to the sender.

Do different countries impose different restriction on what can be sent?

There are different restrictions on what can be sent to different countries. Restrictions may be imposed on items such as: tea, condensed milk, alcohol and films. A list of restrictions can be found at [www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au) if you are not able to access the Australia Post website, you can contact the National Welfare Coordination Centre on 1800 801 026 for guidance.
Will my mail be opened at any stage?

Australia Post or any foreign postal authority may open any article that they suspect may contain goods liable for customs duty or taxes, or prohibited items. Australia Post does not release dutiable items for delivery until the addressee pays the Customs Duty.

How do I keep track of my mail?

When sending a lot of mail or parcels, it can be hard to keep track of what has been sent and what has been received. Many people have found it useful to number (top left hand corner) their letters and parcels. Given that the mail system is also the main supply system into the Operational Area, it is not uncommon for parcels and letters to arrive out of order. The numbering system also helps the person receiving mail to know what else may be on its way.

What do I do if I have missing or lost mail?

All queries regarding lost or missing mail should be directed to Australia Post on: