

The following table shows approximately the international postages levied in the colony immediately prior to and after its entrance into the Union :—

Old Rates expiring on 30th September, 1891.			Per ½ oz.	Union Rates introduced from 1st October, 1891.
Letters addressed to	United Kingdom <i>via</i> San Francisco and Direct lines		2½d.	2½d. per ½ oz.
	United Kingdom <i>via</i> Suez		6d.	
	British colonies and foreign countries (except Australia and South Sea Islands)		6d., 7d., 8d., 9d., 1s., and 1s. 2d.	
	Post-cards		2d. per single card.	
Book and sample packets from 1s. 4d. to 2s. 8d. per lb. ...			1½d. per card. (reply cards, 3d.) 4d. per lb.	
Newspapers addressed to	United Kingdom <i>via</i> San Francisco and Direct lines		1d. per paper	1d. per paper.
	United Kingdom <i>via</i> Suez		2d. per paper	
	British colonies and foreign countries (except Australia and South Sea Islands), 1d. per paper, and from 1s. 4d. to 2s. 8d. per lb.			

The adoption of Union rules for international correspondence has also led to important modifications in the inland tariff and conditions of transmission, all in the direction of further concessions to the public. Not only has the book and sample postage been reduced to half the previous rates (from 8d. to 4d. per lb.), but by the introduction of the commercial-paper and a liberal extension of the privileges under the printed-paper post, many articles formerly liable to letter-postage (5s. 4d. per lb.) are now admissible at printed or commercial-paper rates (4d. per lb.).

The right of transit by the most expeditious routes is guaranteed throughout the entire territory of the Union, and all the postal communications maintained by the different countries for their own correspondence are available for the transmission of Union mail-matter at moderate transit-rates.

The transit-charges payable by any country within the Union cannot exceed the following amounts :—

For territorial transits,—	
Letters and post-cards	2 francs per kilo = 8·71d. per lb.
Other articles	25 centimes per kilo = 1·09d. per lb.
For sea transits,—	
Letters and post-cards	15 francs per kilo = 65·31d. per lb.
Other articles	1 franc per kilo = 4·354d. per lb.

The sea-transit rates are so regulated that their aggregate for the different classes of mail-matter cannot exceed the rates already mentioned. It was mainly due to the reduction of transit-charges formerly payable to the exceedingly moderate rates under the Convention (the rates now payable are in many cases barely one-fourth those formerly charged) that the department has been enabled to adopt the present low and uniform international tariff.

Redirected international articles are treated as correspondence exempt from transit costs, and can be sent to any part of the world without additional prepayment. And the abolition of redirection-charges also applies to the delivery within the colony of all classes of correspondence.

Unpaid and insufficiently-prepaid articles are charged on delivery double the deficiency at the prepaid rates in all the countries of the Union—superseding the varying, and, in many instances, anomalous practices of surcharging previously in force.

Each Union country retains the postages collected within its territory, but defrays the whole cost of conveyance of its despatched mail-matter to destination. This reduces international accounts to a minimum. Moreover, the system of accounts based on actual results, which involves the weighing or counting of all classes of correspondence for each destination at offices of despatch and receipt, is superseded by a simple system of triennial countings, extending over a period of four weeks, on the basis of which all transit costs are ascertained.

The Union also provides one uniform, simple, and efficient check on the due receipt of mails at offices of destination by a system of numbering, as against other less efficient practices formerly in vogue.

Acknowledgments of the due receipt of registered letters by addressees in any part of the Union may be obtained by the payment at posting of a fee of 2½d.

In the case of loss of a registered letter an indemnity of 50 francs (£2) is payable to the sender, or, at his request, to the addressee. The necessary Legislative sanction to the application of this principle in this colony will shortly be sought.

It may be observed that delegates from the different Union countries meet in conference quinquennially, and determine upon such amendments in the Convention and detailed regulations for its execution as experience in the interval may have suggested. Each of the Australasian Colonies is entitled to send a delegate to the Congress who may take part in the deliberations, but only one vote can be exercised by the combined Australasian Colonies. The last of these Conferences was held in Vienna, in May, June, and July, 1891. In addition to a number of alterations in the regulations, which mainly affect departmental questions, it decided upon important modifications in the printed-paper rules, in the direction of affording further concessions to the public, and these were introduced in the colony on the 19th July last.

The full text of the Postal Union Convention and the detailed regulations for its execution will be found at page 29.