

Australia in Depth Article #110

New discovery – *used* example of 1972-76 50¢ Pioneer Transport showing black *largely* omitted

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As published in *Stamp News* July 2006

I recently had the pleasure of examining the first recorded used example of a colour omission on the 50¢ Pioneer Transport stamp, which has since been issued a certificate of opinion as genuine. Unfortunately I was not the lucky finder of this stamp; however, it is certainly worth looking for as other examples would almost certainly have existed at the time of issue. They may have all been lost, however, with the first such example turning up nearly thirty years after this stamp was taken off issue, whilst highly unlikely, you never know your luck.



The new discovery with a normal stamp for comparison

On the left stamp in the illustration above, the black colour is *largely* omitted. This is particularly evident in the absence of the words 'AUSTRALIA', '50¢', and much of the detail in the carriage and the top parts of the far horse. Much of the detail in the lower part of the carriage, particularly the wheels, the far horse's legs and the words 'PIONEER TRANSPORT' remain normal.

Issued from 1972 to 1976, this denomination had printings on Wiggins Teape paper and KP5D paper, more commonly referred to as cream paper and white paper respectively. With the exception of this new discovery, all of the recorded colour omissions are on the Wiggins Teape paper, are in mint condition and are either *complete* omissions or *very minor* partial omissions by comparison to the new discovery. Of the previously recorded format it is believed that one sheet was issued showing the black completely omitted from the final column of the left pane in combination with a minor omission in the column before. This format is shown below in two of the few surviving pieces intact with normal stamp(s). In addition, the top row shows the black autotron colour strip in the margin omitted. It is known that at least one example of the complete omission has survived a single stamp. Assuming all of the issued examples from this sheet survived, there would be ten examples of the complete omission and ten of the partial, however, the rarity of this error on the market over the last twenty years, and the fact that at least one is a single, alludes to the possibility that some may have been broken up and used, so they may not have all survived.

Some years ago I purchased my first example of the missing colour in this stamp from an advertisement in *Stamp News* for \$800, being the single referred to above. That would be a bargain on today's market as a single is now catalogued at \$4,000 in the current edition of the Australian Commonwealth Specialists' Catalogue (**ACSC**).



The strip from top of sheet with the black autotron colour omitted

The largest known multiple of this error is a most spectacular block of nine, showing the full omission in column number five and the almost consistent partial omission in column number four.



The largest recorded surviving multiple

Aside from the fact that the new discovery is on the different paper, the fact that it is used creates significant interest, as there are a growing group of collectors who only collect used stamps. With most of the known missing colour errors across all issues only surviving in mint condition, there are significantly fewer such items that this group of collectors are able to include in their collections.

In addition, it is worth noting that the omission of the new discovery is *vertical* in its format with the colour missing from the top of the design and coming back in towards the base, rather than *horizontal*. The latter is normal for the horizontal stamps of this series, as they passed through the press in that manner. The ACSC describes how this occurs in detail. There is no ready explanation as to how the vertical format of the omission occurred. It may have been due to some foreign matter over this and possibly other units. There were five colours used in printing this stamp, with the black being printed last, so that if feasible, however, by no means certain.

Whilst this used stamp does not qualify for listing in **Stanley Gibbons** as they only catalogue complete omissions, it is a pretty safe bet that it will be included in the next update of the **ACSC Decimals** catalogue.



