

**Opening Statement by Christine Holgate
Environment and Communications Committee 13 April 2021**

Thank you, Senators. I have committed to be part of this process, as I do not want what has happened to me, to happen to anyone ever again. Everyone should have the right to come to work and be safe and everyone should be protected from workplace bullying.

I have only ever wanted what was best for Australia Post and its people. I passionately wanted to help the organisation grow and support the communities of Australia to thrive.

Yet, I lost my job, a job that I loved, because I was humiliated by our Prime Minister for committing no offence and then bullied by my own Chairman. Lucio di Bartolomeo unlawfully stood me down at the public direction of the Prime Minister. This made my leadership at Australia Post untenable and seriously threatened my health.

I had done no wrong, but their bullying of me was far from over. I was subjected to a biased investigation and intimidated with constant threats of further allegations and criticism. Throughout this time, my health had deteriorated to the point where I could not find my voice to fight back.

I am silenced no more.

This is the day that the Chairman of Australia Post and the other men involved in what happened to me never saw coming. It is thanks to the determination, courage and strength of the two women beside me, as well as Sue Davies and a number of strong-willed parliamentarians, that this day has come.

Senators, I know you have all read my submission, so I will not take up too much of your time in repeating it in these opening remarks.

Suffice to say, if not for this Committee, Australia Post's Chairman would likely have succeeded in getting away with lying to the Australian people, their Senate and the employees and partners of Australia Post. Not least, he would never have been held accountable for his actions in bullying me.

My evidence today is backed up by written proof. It is backed up by independent witnesses. It is incontrovertible.

In contrast the Chairman of Australia Post fabricated my agreement to stand down as CEO and has continued to lie about it until this day. He did so to save his own position from political peril, and because he assumed he would never be called to account for his actions.

He has also lied about other important matters relating to the future of Australia Post. This must not be allowed to stand. Australia Post is a vital national asset and one which I passionately believe serves the Australian people, their economy and their individual communities in hugely important ways. I was honoured to lead it and I was devastated to be

driven out of it, but it's employees, delivery partners and Community Post Offices, will always have a stamp on my heart.

I have said consistently since October 22, 2020 that I have done nothing wrong and that I had not agreed to stand down as CEO. I have provided comprehensive written proof to support these statements. Australia Post and its Chairman have provided no evidence of any kind to the contrary. They have produced lies. I am sure that this will become even more apparent during the course of this Committee's work.

The simple truth is this: I was bullied out of my job. I was humiliated and driven to despair. I was thrown under the bus so that the Chairman of Australia Post could curry favour with his political masters, to whom he owes his position on the Board.

But I am still here, and stronger for surviving this dreadful situation. Thanks to this Committee and the amazing support I have received from so many Australians, I am making a stand for those who don't have the platform I have been given, to fight against the bullying they have endured. There are so many Australians who have told me their own stories of being victims of workplace harassment. Today I stand here in support of them and all the people who have been intimidated, but had no voice.

I am also providing the Committee with 3 additional submissions today.

- The first is a comprehensive chronology of the key events, to aid the Senators on tracking what happened and when.
- The second contains further details on my unlawful standing down, including a legal opinion from the leading Senior Counsel Ingmar Taylor, who confirms my forced standing down was unlawful and repudiated my contract.
- My third submission gives clarity on the secret BCG review. A review the Chair, the Executive team, and I, were extensively involved with. A review which if the Government had supported would have ravaged the jobs and services Australia Post offers. I objected vigorously to the BCG recommendations and I still do. It is completely the wrong strategy for Australia Post, its customers, its team and its communities. I believe Australia Post can have a strong future, if it is allowed to grow and interference is minimalised. Our recent results evidence that we were on course in securing this.

I urge the Senators to ensure our national treasure, Australia Post, is protected. That the lying and bullying is stopped and those who have perpetrated it are held to account. I ask this not just for those us sitting here, but for the many families who depend on Australia Post every day and in respect to all of those who have suffered workplace bullying. May the legacy of this Senate Inquiry be, bullying, intimidation and lying will not be tolerated.

Thank you all so much for this opportunity- I look forward to answering your questions.