

Senate Inquiry Australia Post

Christine Holgate Submission 19th March 2021

PROTECT SERVE SAFEGUARD



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Note:

- This submission has been prepared to the best of my knowledge due to the limitations to access historical data.
- It is provided under parliamentary privilege to assist the Senate in their Inquiry.

Executive Summary:

It is almost five months since the events of October 22nd, 2020, when, for no justified reason, I was humiliated in Parliament and then unlawfully stood down by the Australia Post Chair from a role I was passionately committed to.

Throughout this period, I have only made one statement- my reluctant offer to resign- and I have deliberately avoided the opportunity to speak out about what happened. At the time I believed remaining silent was in the best interests of Australia Post and of my own health, which the actions of others and ensuing events had severely compromised.

The experience the Chair of Australia Post and others put me through - which continues - should never be allowed to happen again, not just at Australia Post, but in any organisation, to any person, in any role.

The Chair of Australia Post not only unlawfully stood me down, he lied repeatedly to the Australian people and to their Parliament about his actions. Time after time he has made statements that I had agreed to stand down when I had done no such thing. The evidence in this submission is irrefutable and I urge you to read it in full.

He then abandoned me to a media firestorm that he and others had created and cut me off from resources, despite knowing that these events had caused me to seek mental health care and medication. When I pleaded for help, my pleas were met with continuous requests to examine credit card expense records, on the disguise that they must be made public, presumably to cause me even greater harm. Their actions were and remains, an exercise to seek justification, after the fact, for the failure to treat me fairly.

When I offered to resign to protect our organisation, my letter to him was leaked to the media before he had even responded to me. He then made his own statement which was and remains false and then hours later sent me a counter-offer - itself confirmation that no agreement had been reached. When I asked that afternoon for an opportunity to send a message to all Australia Post employees to thank them for the privilege of working with them, it was denied.

In short, I was treated like a criminal by my own Chairman, but I had committed no crime. To be clear, the purchase of the four watches as a reward for the efforts of executives who delivered the pivotal Bank@Post deal was legal, within Australia Post's policies, within my own signing authority limits, approved by the previous Chairman, expensed appropriately, signed off by auditors and the CFO, widely celebrated within the organisation, and presented at a morning tea by the previous Chairman and me with a thank you card signed by both of us. It was then found to be legal by the "review" which was clearly intended to find it otherwise.

Yet somehow, I was forced out of my job over it. For this, I blame one person- the Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo. He knew all of the facts but chose to stand aside from his responsibility to defend me and Australia Post, from those who didn't know all of the facts. He then lied about his actions and about other important issues.

The Chair's counter-offer to my resignation, had I agreed, would have prevented me working for 12 months, I would have received no pay for my separation and it would have prevented me from speaking about any of Australia Post's actions past, present and future, including those that may be unlawful. To this date, I have signed no deed of release with Australia Post, despite my many requests to resolve this matter.

Having lied to the media and through them the Australian public, the Chair then attended the Senate on November 9th 2020 where his evidence was seriously misleading. I raised my concerns in writing with him and the Board, with both shareholder Ministers, and Maddocks, giving detailed examples and asked them to address it, but they have chosen not to; yet at no time has anyone denied my feedback was correct. It is unacceptable that the Chair of a major public-owned enterprise can mislead the Senate over his knowledge of something as important as a review of the organisation commissioned by the Government. He knows all about the BCG report, despite his lies to the Senate. He saw drafts of it, he sat in five-hour long meetings about its contents. The Senate must hold him to account or risk setting a precedent that it can be misled by people who are supposed to be serving the community.

The Government's inquiry by Maddocks found I had acted within my authority. I had acted appropriately and within the authority given to me by the organisation. I was exonerated (just as I should have been) after an inquiry where I was cut off from emails and access to information and told, for any support I need, I must only communicate with Australia Post's external lawyers. I was instructed that I must not speak to employees or customers of the \$7.5 billion, 80,000 employee organisation I had been leading from strength to strength since my appointment. I was deliberately isolated and continue to be, despite the clear findings and evidence that I have done nothing wrong.

The Chair made a statement that he would have 'vetoed the watches', unfairly influencing the investigation and failing to explain the true story why the watches were used as rewards or the nationally significant benefit the watches recognised. Every one of the current Board members interviewed said they would not have supported them, yet the same Directors supported purchasing a pen for the previous retiring Chair, as well as multi-million dollar payouts to the previous CEO and not least the gifting of many more expensive rewards by him.

These actions and false claims which have been made seriously damaged my professional reputation, and contributed to a significant decline in my health.

I was selected to lead Australia Post after an exhaustive international recruitment campaign and came to my position after nine years as Chief Executive at Blackmores. My experience and expertise have been recognised on multiple occasions including being the only female to be awarded CEO of the Year by the CEO Institute, being named the highest-ranking female on the Australian Financial Review's Power List (and most recently receiving a Scorecard Rating of 95% (where target is 70% and maximum is 100%) from the Australia Post Board.

To suggest I would ignore a fundamental policy or commit a blatant error of judgement, even such as this, is an absolute nonsense and has no credibility when scrutinised objectively.

Under my leadership I have exhibited both the ability to, and the commitment towards, reducing waste and increasing both revenue and profitability and enhancing the culture of every business I have been associated with. The evidence in this submission is compelling on this front. I was paid a fraction of the previous CEO of Australia Post's remuneration, and I reduced the 'office' spending by more than 60% compared to his costs.

All of these terrible examples of behaviour by others were raised with our Shareholder Ministers Birmingham and Fletcher, again as well as Maddocks. Time after time, I reached out and asked for help to resolve things amicably. I have received none.

Australia Post is a critical national asset going through a major transformation. It deserves and requires the very best leadership, not just at the Executive level, but also at the Board. Under my

leadership Australia Post actually increased its revenue against all odds and defied the predictions of many Government reviews and we grew our profits, whilst securing jobs for our people and continuing to deliver in the face of COVID, bushfires and storms.

Many families and businesses depend on Australia Post for their economic survival, these include our own employees and our partners. Many of our partners, like our 3,000-plus Community Post Offices and our Delivery Contractors, mortgage their homes and take on significant debt to invest in and be part of the organisation. If the organisation fails, due to arbitrary and poor decisions at the top, as a consequence these partners will fail. This should not be acceptable to those who can influence the course of events.

The people of our country must have leaders that tell the truth to Parliament. They should not bully or intimidate. They should lead by example and respect those who work with them. If they make a mistake, they should simply recognise and apologise, they should not continue to push an agenda that is grossly unjust to avoid their own moment of embarrassment.



Angela Cramp, Founder and Director of LPOG

I am deeply appreciative of the significant support I have received and continue to from our employees, our customers, our partners – especially our Community Licensed Post Offices, thousands of individuals across the country and from many political leaders representing all parties. Their unwavering commitment to me has carried me through this difficult time and is making me strong again.

I am determined that going forward I will be a stronger leader. I have gained a deep appreciation for what it feels like to be alone when fighting a mighty power for a crime you have not committed. I will try to avoid “failing the pub test”, but I will not avoid the pub nor the people in it- they have a greater instinct for fairness and ability to detect foul play than many “leaders” assume on their behalf.

It was an honour to join Australia Post. I took on the leadership challenge, together with a significant pay cut, because I was passionately committed to supporting its transformation and I believed strongly in the important role it plays in communities and in particular, regional and rural Australia. The recent exceptional financial results evidence that Australia Post is now growing, the

transformation is under way and it has a strong viable future ahead. I am proud to have led the team and what we have delivered together.

I remain deeply committed to serving our country and helping our economic recovery. I have remained as Chair of the Australian ASEAN Council and Co-Chair for the Ministerial Advisory Council for Trade.

I hope the legacy of my recent experience and the telling of this truth is accountability. Misleading our Parliament and acting unlawfully at any level should surely carry with it serious consequences. Australia Post, like all our nationally significant organisations, should not be political playthings where board positions are used as rewards for political services done. From this experience we must build a stronger, more capable Board and ensure this important asset is protected and nurtured for many years to come, for the benefit of all Australians.

It is for these reasons I have agreed to break my silence and make a submission to this inquiry today.

Acknowledgements:

There are many people I would like to acknowledge, some I cannot, as they would want their support silent, but they and I know the role they have played in bringing this truth to light.

First, a huge thank you to all the Australia Post Team, including our employees, our Posties, our Delivery Drivers, our operations teams including customer service, our retail teams, our Community Post Offices and our support and administration teams, I am so deeply appreciative of your belief in me. Please never stop saying thank you and asking each other “R U OK”, the camaraderie you have demonstrated is what sets you apart and underpins our success.

I would particularly like to recognize a few personal support people, including Taeressa Fawthrop – who has been the most loyal friend; Vicki Ballantyne for incredible professionalism, Sue Davies from Australia Post for her leadership courage; Ross Thornton – who has worked tirelessly to support the truth, Angela Cramp and our many Licensees – your unwavering commitment has been incredible; Bryan Belling, my patient lawyer & Max Kimber my barrister and Cate Page - who taught me how to stand again. I will forever be indebted for your support.

Whilst there are too many to write, it would be remiss of me not to mention, Marcus Blackmore, John Curtis, Shaun Bonnet, Drew Abercrombie, and Ian Silk, who have as Business leaders acted at all times exemplary. Thank you also to our many customers, big and small, who reached out so often to offer their support.

There have been many political leaders, from all parties who have been supportive and/or spoken out, many I cannot mention. A very diverse group, but in my own experience, bound together with a commitment to hold up the values of our great country.

I would also like to acknowledge a diverse range of media sources, especially Robert Gottliebsen, Terry McCrann, Patrick Durkin and Ben Fordham. In addition, new media sources including Ronni Salt and Robbie Barwick. Whilst you may not know me, you pushed for the truth to be told and without that, this Inquiry would not be happening.

Last, but most importantly I would like to acknowledge my family. My husband Mike, My mother and my two boys, Brian and Edward. Your love fueled my strength to not allow events to define me, but to be the person I am.

Glossary of Individuals Names (appearing in Submission)

Name	Position
Josh Frydenberg	Treasurer, Australian Government
Simon Birmingham	Minister for Finance
Paul Fletcher	Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts
Stacie Hall	First Assistant Secretary, Department of Finance
Richard Windyear	Deputy Secretary, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Ryan Bloxson	Chief of Staff, Paul Fletcher
Lucio Di Bartolomeo	Chairman Australia Post
Tony Nutt	Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
Andrea Staines	Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
Deidre Wilmott	Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
Michael Ronaldson	Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
Bruce McIver	Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
Jan West	Chair of the Risk and Audit Committee Director (non-executive) Australia Post Board
John Stanhope	Former Chair of Board Australia Post
Angela Cramp	Founder & Director of LPOG (Licensed Post Office Group) Australia Post Licensee
Rodney Boys	Chief Financial Officer and Current CEO Australia Post
Sue Davies	Executive General Manager, People and Culture Australia Post
Gary Starr	Executive General Manager, Business, Government and International Australia Post
Ingo Bohlken	Executive General Manager, Products and Innovation Australia Post
Anna Bennet	Strategy General Manager Australia Post
Deanne Keetelaar	General Manager Payments and Financial Services, Products and Innovation, Australia Post
John Cox	EGM, Transformation and Enablement Australia Post
Nick MacDonald	General Counsel Company Secretary Australia Post
Vicki Ballantyne	Executive Assistant to the CEO (former and current) Australia Post
Taeressa Fawthrop	General Manager, Customer Services Australia Post
Janelle Hopkins	Former Chief Financial Officer Australia Post
Greg Sutherland	Former General Manager of Business Development, Australia Post
Ross Thornton	Advisor
Max Kimber	Barrister representing Christine Holgate
Bryan Belling	Lawyer representing Christine Holgate
Robert Gottlieb	Journalist Writer
Terry McCrann	Journalist Writer

A, If the Gifting of watches was with the knowledge of the then Australia Post Chair and within existing Australia Post Policy;

Summary:

In October 2018, four Australia Post executives supported securing a landmark investment of initially \$220 million from three major banks into the Community Post Offices. This agreement saved the Bank@Post service in around 3,000 Community Post Offices across Australia. The service was threatened with closure as it was heavily loss making. If the service had closed, the consequences would have been devastating for regional communities and many local Post Offices would have closed.

These landmark agreements were the largest ever investment into the Community Post Offices from a non-government agency and gave significant recognition and importance to the Community Post Offices and the vital role they play across Australia.

In recognition of their hard work and efforts, the Chairman and I rewarded the 4 executives with a Cartier watch, of an average value of \$5,000 each. These watches were specifically not gifts - they were rewards for their outstanding work.

My signing authority at the time was \$150,000 for individual rewards and up to \$50 million for contracts. I was later informed that one of the recipients had in 2015 received a \$50,000 cash payment after working on another significant project.

The rewarding of these watches was celebrated throughout the organisation and every senior manager was very aware they were given. They were audited through the Fringe Benefits Tax process, tax was paid, and this was acknowledged in the 2019 accounts. Rewarding these watches did not breach any organisation or government policy - in fact it was in line with Australia Post's reward and recognition policies. At no stage did anyone at Australia Post or anyone else including our auditors, raise any issue or concern in giving them - on the contrary they were celebrated.

Background.

By January 2018 Bank@Post was one of the three prime financial services Australia Post offered in Community Post Offices. The portfolio was in rapid decline and had shrunk by more than 25% to less than \$200 million, but covered transactions valued at \$50 billion. Bank@Post had a revenue of approximately \$45 million.

Historically Australia Post had offered a transaction cost for a withdrawal or deposit to the major banks, although each bank was charged differently, which created more complexity.

The Licensed Post Offices had complained in both the 2014 Senate Inquiry and in the 2017 Franchise Review that they were being underpaid for the work they were doing to support the service and wanted to be paid more. Their agreement with Australia Post had not been renegotiated for more than 26 years. Australia Post charged Licensed Post Offices to use their technology platform at a cost of approximately \$3,000 each per annum. The technology was 30 years old and was not only outdated but also considered a risk. Some Licensed Post Offices chose not to pay the new \$3,000 per annum fee for this obsolete technology. Exacerbating the risks further was the fact that many post offices still counted their cash manually, they had not been provided with any simple automation or even a cash/coin counter. In essence their technology was 1970's standard.

In the previous years the four major banks had increasingly closed their bank branches and had begun to withdraw ATM's from regional and rural communities. However, there was still a significant requirement to serve the communities, particularly small businesses and older and more vulnerable Australians. Analysis proved that when a bank branch closed, the number of transactions at the local post office grew significantly. Consequently, there was an increasing need to manage the cash differently and more regularly, increase security and ensure the technology platform was secure.

In October 2018 Australia Post signed CBA, Westpac and NAB to a new Bank@Post agreement: CBA for five years, Westpac and NAB for three years at \$20 million per annum each plus GST plus revised transaction costs. The value of these three contracts was an additional \$220 million over the following years, plus GST (\$22 million), plus transaction costs.

Prior to this agreement the service was at threat of closure, as it was estimated by Korda Mentha that the service lost \$48 million the previous year. Closing the service would not only have cut jobs and devastated the livelihoods of thousands of Community Post offices, but it also would have created significant economic challenges for over 50% of communities, or over 1550 communities in Australia, who no longer had a bank branch but depended on Australia Post for access to basic financial services.

It was critically important that not only the losses for the service were covered and the licensees be rewarded fairly for their effort, but also that investment was made into the technology supporting the Post Offices coupled with improved security, training and marketing.

Our proposal was to charge an effective access fee, which we called a Community Representation Fee (CRF) and to then have standard transaction costs for either in metro or rural and regional communities. The Community Representation fee was determined by assessing the costs to provide the service and the usage. The plan was that all Financial Services companies would be offered the opportunity to use the service, but their CRF would be based on the tier they fell into. The four major banks would be offered the same fee structure. This was very important as the ACCC required us to treat all four banks equally. The proposal was reviewed and supported by Treasury. The CRF for the four major Banks was set at \$20 million pa plus GST for a minimum of three years and a maximum up to five years, plus a metro transaction cost of \$2.50 and a rural and regional fee of \$2.65.

After several months of exhaustive negotiations, in early October 2018 CBA first and then later that week, NAB and Westpac, all committed to the new service. This was a landmark agreement and gave the largest capital investment into the Post Office network in our history. The Treasurer Josh Frydenberg played a significant role supporting the agreements and this was acknowledged in the announcement with CBA. ***See Appendix 1.***

These agreements protected the service continuing, secured investment to undertake a technology upgrade to the post offices, underpinned a new agreement with the Licensed Post Offices, provided marketing and training support and financed increasing cash services.

Today over 75 different financial organisations have signed up for the service. We have continued to develop the service offering, launching cash floats and have just recently launched a new service which enables small businesses to apply for loans from a bank at their local Community Post Office.

The agreement also has played a major role protecting the viability of Community Post Offices. With 80% + of Australia Post's Post Office network licensed, it is critical that they remain viable, if they are to remain open. It should be noted that Australia Post has an obligation to provide 4,000 Post

Offices, with 2500 of these in rural and regional Australia, however they only operate 700+ themselves.



In 2020 Australia witnessed Bushfires, Floods and then the COVID19 pandemic. Throughout these times, the role of the community post offices was critical to both support and enable the communities to recover. For example, in Cobargo after the fires, the community lost electricity, the sole remaining bank branch near-by closed, retailers and petrol stations would only take cash, which was only available at the Cobargo Post Office. In Victoria, when the 5km restriction was enforced, the only place many residents could get access to basic financial services was their local Community Post Office. These times proved the absolute imperative of this service.

Following the initial agreements, there have been further significant improvements to the deal for Community Post Offices under Bank@Post. The annual minimum payments to the Licensed Post Offices were raised by 25%+ to \$40,000 per annum and the transaction costs by 50%. Technology would be provided free of charge, cash counters were provided, and security would be increased.

A couple of weeks after announcing the agreements with CBA, Westpac and NAB, in a meeting with the then Chair, we discussed if and how we should recognize the individuals who played such a major part in securing the agreements. Ingo Bohlken, the Executive General Manager Products & Innovation, shared with us that in Germany, his former employer Deutsche Post often gave watches when an individual had done an exceptional role. I wanted to give these individuals an award that recognised this historic moment in our time and their role in securing it, hence why watches were chosen.

My Executive Assistant was tasked with buying them and she organized a small morning tea as an opportunity to present them. Both John Stanhope as Chair of the Board and I wrote a note to each of the four recipients in their accompanying cards. Janelle Hopkins, the CFO and Ingo Bohlken joined me and the four managers for the presentation and John Stanhope joined us for a short period.

In recognition for securing this agreement the four executives who had led this work were rewarded with a watch. They were:

- Gary Starr, Executive General Manager Business & Government reporting to myself.
- Greg Sutherland, General Manager Business Development, reporting to Chris Blake.
- Anna Bennet, Strategy Manager under Chris Blake.
- Deanne Keetelaar, General Manager Financial Services, reporting to Ingo Bohlken.

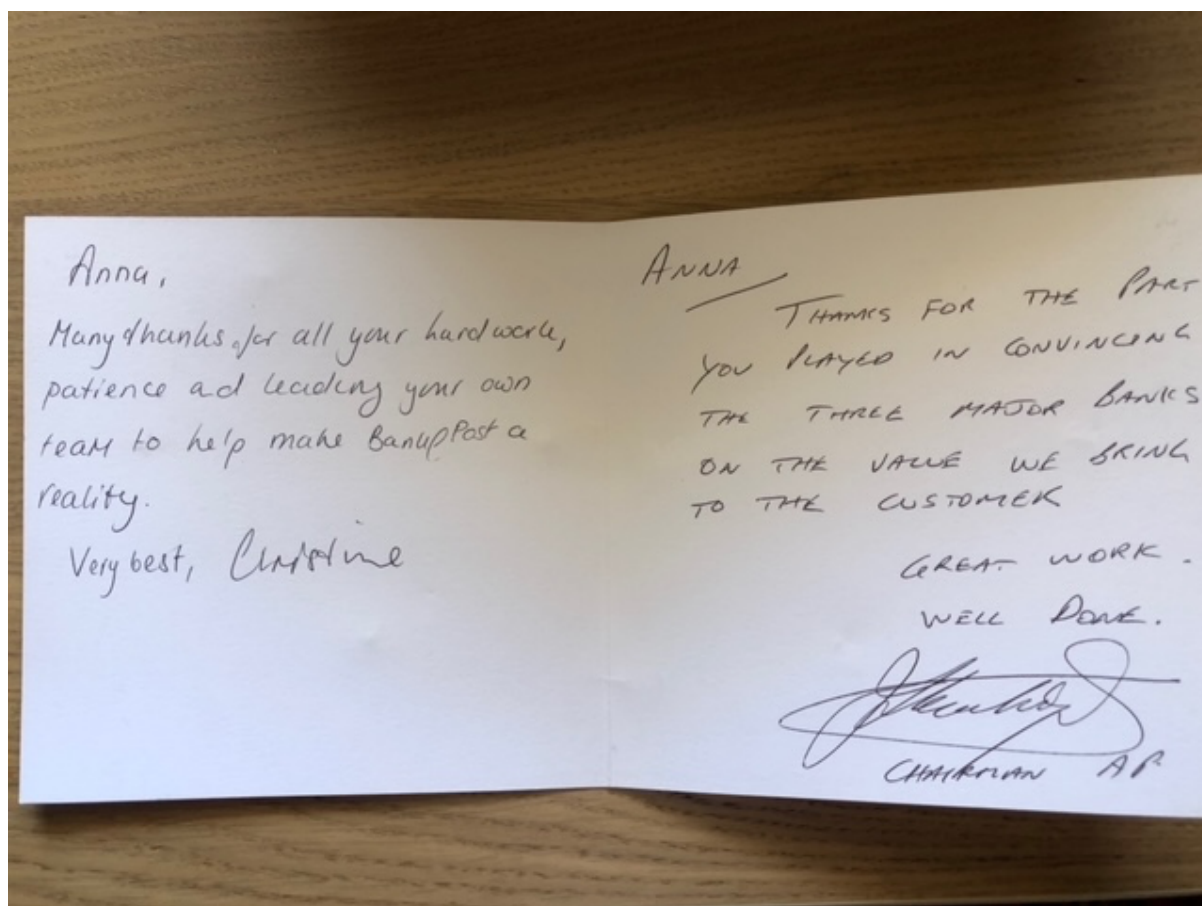
The watches were purchased by my Executive Assistant, Vicki Ballantyne, on behalf of myself and the Chair, they were approved by the Chair at the time, John Stanhope, and the cost was signed off by the CFO at the time Janelle Hopkins, they were accounted for properly, with FBT recognised. The purchase was audited. The total cost was approximately \$20,000. The watches were openly celebrated, they were within our gift and remuneration policy and at no point did anyone, including Board members, auditors or anyone in the Department of Finance who regularly reviewed our accounts, raise any concerns over this choice of a gift.

Two of the recipients were in the same team as the Company Secretary and the General Counsel. The General Council had worked in the organisation for over 15 years at the time. The CFO, as I recall, had worked at Australia Post for seven years. All of these people were very familiar with governance and worked closely with me and the shareholder. All supported the acquisition at the time.

The annual report and accounts for this period were signed off by the current CFO and Acting CEO, Rodney Boys as well as the Board and I. Several current directors were on the Board at the time of this agreement, including Jan West, Chair of the Risk & Audit Committee, Bruce McIver, Michael Ronaldson and Deidre Wilmott.

Conclusion.

These watches were given as rewards to recognise the efforts of four managers who had worked tirelessly to secure these agreements and protect a critical service for our country. The rewards were within my signing authority, they did not breach any organisation policy, they were celebrated and recognised and approved by many across the leadership group including the Chair and the CFO.



Photograph of one of the cards signed by the then Chairman, John Stanhope and I.

B, How the gifting of four watches compares with bonuses and gifts provided during the term of the previous Chief Executive Officers and within our Government owned corporations such as National Broadband Network:

Summary:

The rewarding of watches to four Australia Post executives for securing the largest investment in history into Australia's community post offices, which protected and secured a vital community service, cost just less than \$20,000, i.e., an average of \$5,000 each. These rewards which were given more than two years ago, within my authority as CEO, completely in line with Australia Post policies, signed off by the CFO and former Chairman, expensed appropriately, and signed off by the auditor.

Australia Post is a major organisation with ~80,000 employees with revenue approaching ~\$8 billion. I was selected for the position following an exhaustive international recruitment campaign and came to my position after nine years as Chief Executive at Blackmores. My experience and expertise have been recognised in multiple occasions including the only female to be awarded CEO of Year by the CEO Institute, being named the highest-ranking female on Australian Financial Review's Power List and most recently receiving a scorecard rating of 95% from the Australia Post Board.

To suggest I would ignore a fundamental Policy or commit an error of judgement, even such as this, is an absolute nonsense and has no credibility when scrutinised objectively.

Under my leadership I have exhibited both the ability to and the commitment towards reducing waste and increasing both revenue and profitability and enhancing the culture of every business I have been associated with.

The expenses of the CEO and Board offices of Australia Post have been significantly cut under my leadership.

My own remuneration is a fraction of the previous CEO, considerably lower than the CEO of NBN and lower than the CEO leading Australia Post in 2008; all of these CEO's were male.

There has been considerable misreporting of my expenses, some of which appears to have been deliberately leaked to defame my character and rationalise the unlawful treatment I continue to receive. My team and I were absolutely committed to improving the efficiency of Australia Post, protecting the jobs of our people, serving the country and safeguarding this important national asset. Evidence points that we were making significant progress.

The Comparison costs of the CEO & Board etc.

The Expenses of the CEO and Board fall under three prime cost centres, including that of the MD and Staff, the Board and the Board and shareholder liaison. In FY17, under the previous CEO, these costs totalled \$13.07 million. This figure appears to under-estimate the accrual of the previous CEO salary by approximately \$4.7 million. If this was included, the cost would equate to \$17.77 million. In contrast, in FY20 the same costs under my leadership were \$6.34 million. I reduced the expenses of the CEO, Board and leadership team by \$11.34 million or 65%.

These costs were provided to me by the Australia Post CFO in preparation for the October 22nd Senate Estimates. This detail was shared with Maddocks, who undertook the investigation, but the significant improvement was not recognised in their report.

The Comparison of CEO Remuneration.

Name	Job Title	Revenue of organisation	Year	Base \$M	STI \$M	STI Deferral* \$M	LTI \$M	Non Monetary \$M	Super Contribution \$M	LSL \$M	Total \$M
A Fahour	CEO Australia Post	\$6.6bn	2017	2.040	2.175	0.733	4.00**	0.1	1.75	0.04	\$10.84
C Holgate	CEO Australia Post	\$7bn	2019	1.441	0.83	0.22			0.02	0.05	\$2.56
C Holgate	CEO Australia Post	\$7.5bn	2020	1,417		0.14			0.02	0.04	\$1.61
S Rue	CEO NBN	\$3.8bn	2020	1.865	1.777	***			0.02	0.09	\$3.150

*Represents the accrued portion of short-term incentives that were not payable within 12 months of the end of the period they relate to.

** Paid on 28 July 2017. In addition \$0.5m was paid in FY18

*** CEO NBN does not have a deferred element to STI

This information was provided by Australia Post and is available in Remuneration Reports.

The CEO remuneration comparison above, clearly represents the significant differences. It was widely reported that Community Expectations of Executive Pay for Government Business Enterprise's (GBE's) should be moderated, after the previous CEO of Australia Post's pay was made public. In 2015, when Australia Post reported a PBT loss of \$352 million, the remuneration accrued for the previous CEO totalled \$4.97 million.

Considering the significant complexity of the role leading an organisation of the size of Australia Post and my personal performance against targets set by the Board, the major variances with my own remuneration compared to my male colleagues, who led smaller businesses, demonstrates a significant issue. My remuneration in 2019 & 2020 was not just much lower than my predecessor, or my peer at NBN, it was lower than that of the male CEO leading Australia Post in 2008.

The Comparison Costs of Rewards.

The four watches rewarded with an average individual cost of circa \$5,000 to the Executives for securing a landmark investment of \$220 million plus GST (which effectively saved around 3,000 Community Post Offices across Australia, especially in regional and remote areas where continuation of their service is critical) were within my signing authority, within Australia Post's policies, were approved by the Chair and the CFO at the time and were acknowledged throughout the company. At no point did anyone ever raise with me any issue with these rewards, on the contrary they were considered modest in comparison to the magnitude of the benefit these agreements brought and were celebrated through the organisation.

Whilst these rewards have now been branded by some as lavish, they were extremely modest compared to rewards given previously at Australia Post. This type of rewarding is a highly appropriate and cost-effective form of employee incentivisation widely practiced by businesses big

and small internationally. One of the Australia Post recipients previously had received a \$50,000 bonus under a previous CEO. I have been told that employees have received watches for great performance for many years at Australia Post; some had received cars and others spoke about trips to the Olympics paid for by the organisation. The watches were viewed as a very modest reward for an extraordinary result that effectively saved the livelihoods of many thousands of Licenced Post Office operators and employees and the communities they serve.

General Misreporting of Expenses.

There has been considerable misreporting regarding the expenses of my office, which I recognise is not the fault of any journalist but has been in a form that is highly misleading.

For some months my team and I have been subjected to a scurrilous campaign highlighted by the publication and leaking of misleading reports regarding the management of expenses. These attempt to infer we were leading a wasteful business with an overabundance of largesse. These reports escalated after the events of October 22nd, 2020 when a media frenzy began. I asked regularly would Australia Post address the misreporting, the answer I received was no. The extent of these 'leaks', demonstrate what appears to be a deliberate and vicious intent to defame both my character and professional and personal reputation while diverting attention from a Chair who misled a Senate Inquiry and unlawfully stood me down, provided no public support to me and other critical issues in the Shareholder Ministers office.

Examples of this include:

- Excessive remuneration and rewards for current Executives. Excluding myself, the average of the next top four highest paid executives when I joined had a Fixed Remuneration (TFR) of \$912,000, they could earn up to 110% in a short-term cash incentive and up to 150% in a Long-Term Incentive (LTI), giving a total possible maximum remuneration on average of \$3.28 million per executive. Prior to my appointment LTI's were removed for Executives. However the Board approved significant pay increases for some members of the Executive Team; with the highest paid executive receiving over a 30% increase to their TFR, which in effect resulted him having the ability to earn up to an additional \$800k+ pa. This action was approved whilst 4 of the current Board members were on the Board and prior to me joining. On joining, I addressed this. In 2020, the average Fixed Remuneration of the four highest paid was \$755,000 and the maximum incentive they could have earnt was 100%, giving a total maximum possible remuneration of \$1.5 million, less than half of their predecessors three years earlier. In 2020, no incentives were paid to Executives.
- That I, as CEO, had a credit card with expenses of \$300,000 pa. This is grossly untrue. The Office of the CEO costs are to support the Chair, Board, CEO and major corporate initiatives. These expenses, whilst managed by the Executive Assistant that supported both the Chair and I, were signed off by the CFO (who is now the acting CEO). They were checked and audited by the Finance team. This had been a practice for more than 10 years when I joined. I personally had never seen the individual expenses or receipts before recent months, as these are managed by the CFO and the Executive Assistant. As evidenced above the costs were significantly reduced.
- My personal credit card with the organisation averaged an expenditure of ~\$20,000 per annum. I paid for my own accommodation personally when in Melbourne working. I had never claimed any additional allowances for being away from home, as entitled under the Remuneration Tribunal. These allowances average \$450 per day away from home. We

estimated that the net benefit would be approximately \$60,000 pa, but I chose to forego this.

- All accommodation, flights and car services that were booked and expensed on my behalf were within the Remuneration Tribunal Guidelines, booked through organisation approved providers and were monitored and approved by the CFO, including the current CFO and Acting CEO.
- As part of my role, I did use private car services. Private Car Services were not just used by me, but were used through the Board and management ranks of the organisation, as they are by other GBE's and Government Offices. I am informed that this is a practice that had been established for more than 10 years. The expenses of the car services under the Office of the CEO, included carriage with and for other people. The invoices shared publicly included some personal expenses which the company was reimbursed for, although this detail was never shared publicly. Prior to the recent exercise, I was not aware of the detail of these costs as they were managed by the CFO and the Executive Assistant.
- If my Executive Assistant recognised any expense charges that had been incorrectly coded to the organisation from a service provider, she would alert me and charge me appropriately.
- Maddocks did an extensive review of my expenses and found no examples of dishonesty.
- The incorrect assertion that Australia Post spends \$800,000 on Pot Plants. *"Spending at Australia Post seems to know no bounds, with the organisation's extravagant ways including pot plants."* This was a newspaper headline. The plants in question were part of a services contract under the Australia Post Property Group managed by the CFO. They were provided in 25 buildings, housing 10,000 employees and this cost covered two years. The contract had been agreed by previous management, to secure Green Star Rating and I believe to meet the sustainability targets requested by the Government. The agreements were made prior to the current CFO or being employed at Australia Post. The plants in our personal offices were cancelled by my Executive Assistant when she was given responsibility for them.

C, Actions of the Board of Australia Post following Christine Holgate's offer of Resignation on November 2nd, 2020 leading up to the Chair's request for her to sign an amendment to her contract which would mean the immediate termination of her employment without any benefits, as against the \$11 million bonus paid to her predecessor when he stepped down;

Summary:

On Monday 2nd November, at 10.46am after the 10 most difficult and disappointing days of my career, I wrote to the Australia Post Chair and copied the Board and offered to resign. I felt my position with the current Chair had become untenable, after he continued to act unlawfully regarding my standing down and shown a complete lack of support to combat the significant defamatory comments being reported about me. I felt the situation was causing a great distraction to our people, our customers, our community post offices and it was damaging my health. None of this was good for the organisation that I had devoted myself to leading and whose best interests I had always put ahead of my own.

To evidence that I had no intention of making any disparaging comments about Australia Post or any members of Government, I shared with the board a draft of a statement I intended to make about my resignation in advance of issuing it. My statement clearly states I had offered to resign and I sought no compensation and I would fully support an investigation, but I had asked to be released immediately. My statement did not say I had resigned as I clearly had no agreement with the organization when I drafted it. My accompanying letter to the Board had one condition, that the matter was resolved that day.

The Chair did not contact me.

Hours later (1.30pm) we were informed the statement had been leaked to the media by someone who had been watching Sky News. This leak must have stemmed from the Board.

At 3.13pm we were informed that Australia Post had made a statement saying I had resigned. The Australia Post Chair still had not contacted me to give me any response to my letter.

At 4.13pm the Chair of Australia Post wrote to me and asked me to sign a variation to my contract. If I had signed this letter, it would have potentially prevented me from working for twelve months, I would have received no pay and in addition they added a clause that would prevent me from making any future claim on the organization going forward.

Nobody from the Board called me to resolve the matter that day.

I did not sign their variation to my contract.

My salary was cut off and days later all my access to emails and information was withdrawn. This was done at a time the organisation was very aware my health was suffering very significantly, and the following week I was to face an investigation.

After months of asking for help to fairly conclude this matter, having reached out multiple times to Shareholder Ministers and the Board, **this matter remains unresolved.**

It is of great personal disappointment that many of the same Board members approved significant financial support to the previous CEO after his resignation, yet when considering my position, even though they all knew I was unlawfully stood down, I was treated unfairly. This treatment occurred

(and continues to occur) and I have not been provided with any meaningful support, even though I over-achieved my targets in each year I was employed and had been given a rating of 95% (meeting target achieves 70% and maximum achievement is 100%) by the same Board that year.

Background:

I strongly recommend the Committee Read the Section on The CEO Standing Aside – Timeline 22nd October to 1st November 2020, prior to this section, to enable the committee to get context to the events that led up to my offer to resign.

Sunday 1st November 2020

Robert Gottlieb in The Australian wrote “I make this recommendation with great sadness. I believe that the chief executive of Australia Post, Christine Holgate, should step down. I make that recommendation because the Prime Minister’s actions have created paralysis in the AusPost top administration, which endangers thousands of retailers who are relying on AusPost to deliver an unprecedented mountain of online orders.”

That Sunday as I reflected on all the different advice I had been receiving, the actions of the Chair and the Board the previous week in contrast to the calls of support from customers, the messages of hope from employees and partners and not least speaking to my doctor and family regarding my deteriorating health. I knew I needed to put in place a circuit breaker. I thought about Robert Gottlieb’s words carefully.

Monday 2nd November 2020

After 10 days of considerable pressure, caused by the Chair unlawfully standing me down, appearing not to be telling the truth about our conversations, providing me with no support and appearing to be encouraging misreporting in reference to me, I realized that going forward working together with that Chair was not tenable. I could not understand why the Board were supporting this unlawful and disrespectful behaviour.

In contrast, I received considerable support from our employees, partners, customers, Australian business leaders, members of the public, many political leaders from several parties and especially the Licensed Post Offices, all asking me to remain strong and be hopeful. At the same time our business was heading into our busiest period, peak, this was something we had long planned for and I felt the continuous focus on my situation was extremely distracting. I wrote to the Board and offered to resign.

I wrote the letter. It was not drafted by lawyers. It was drafted with every intent to evidence again to the Board, I only wanted to do what was best for the organization, I would be supportive publicly and demonstrate no grievance and would fully cooperate with the investigation

My only request was that the matter was resolved that day and that I be given an immediate exit, in return I would seek no compensation.

The Board were very aware of the significant impact that these events were having on my health and wellbeing at this time. I was managing high levels of anxiety. I was on sick leave and under medication, all of which they were aware of.

I sent the letter to the Chair and the Board at 10.46am, it included a statement I would release at 2pm, which states I have offered to resign. It did not say I had resigned, as I clearly had no legal agreement with Australia Post when I drafted it. **See Appendix 2.**

I sent the letter sitting in Max Kimber's Chambers with him, my lawyer Bryan Belling, Ross Thornton and Taeressa Fawthrop.

I messaged Australia Post Director Tony Nutt at 10.52am and informed him that I had sent the note, to ensure Board members were aware. Tony Nutt called me, but I told him I could not speak and that my lawyer had suggested questions should come formally to us. My lawyer was concerned that I would be manipulated further.

We heard nothing from the Chair and then at approximately 1.30pm Sky News claimed they had been briefed that I was to resign imminently. It was apparent my statement had been leaked. As my letter had only been given to the Chair and the Board, plus the people sitting in the room with me, we all became further disappointed realising that the leak would have stemmed from the Board.

At 2.30pm after considerable media speculation and having still not heard anything from the Chair, even though I had put a 2pm deadline in my letter, the Board must have been aware of the speculation and where it had stemmed from, we felt forced to admit that I had written to the Chair and the Board and offered to resign. We confirmed and released the statement as it had been shared with the Board earlier that day. I advised the organisation.

We still heard nothing.

At 3.15pm a journalist from *The Australian* shared a copy of a media statement that Australia Post had made, it said I had resigned.

We still heard nothing.

At 3.30pm Australia Post sent a message to employees saying I had resigned. **See Appendix 3.**

After leading the organization through a major transformation which secured services delivered the strongest growth on record, kept and grew jobs and avoided losses the Chair writes one sentence in acknowledgement. The Chair makes no acknowledgement of the considerable hurt and feedback he has received from employees, licensees or customers raising their concerns to him about the treatment of me.

At 4.19pm The Chair wrote to me and asked me to sign a variation to my contract and attached a copy of the statement they had made publicly an hour earlier. **See Appendix 4.**

Their letter evidences that the Chair had no agreement with me when he made his public statement, that I had resigned. The letter in effect acknowledged my offer of resignation, that it would be immediate, I would not be paid any financial compensation but by signing the amendment I would be restricted to everything else in my contract and I could not make any future claim on the organisation. My lawyer questioned whether their offer letter was lawful as it implied, I would not even be paid for my annual leave owing. If I had signed it, I could have in effect be held to not working for 12 months with no pay, as the responsibilities of Australia Post are so broad including retail, financial services, logistics and services, they could have an argument that many organisations and industries competed with them.

Importantly I would not be able to ever address any issues with the organisation's treatment of me now or in the future. The treatment towards me over the previous ten days and specifically that day, gave me no confidence that going into the investigation, they would not further allow mistruths to be said. I did not sign it. No agreement was made.

I received no further formal correspondence from the Board that day on the matter, no details of my statutory rights, nothing.

I did not hear from the Chair at all.

I did though receive a text message from Board Member Bruce McIver "Sad Day"

That afternoon I wrote to Australia Post's Head of Communications and asked her if the organisation would release a note for me to our employees. I received a reply stating "This is an excellent note. I have sent to Rodney for his OK and would be very happy to distribute this afternoon". The note was not sent at that time, it was not supported by the Acting CEO.

On returning home that afternoon we were inundated with television and press reporters. It was extremely intrusive; reporters came into our driveway and were taking pictures through the windows of our home, constantly ringing the doorbell and intercom. Family members and friends at my home became very concerned for my safety. I became trapped in my own home. My husband called the Police and asked that they come to our home and move them on, as they were trespassing and causing a nuisance for our neighbours.

I received thousands of messages of support from employees, partners and Australians, many of whom I have never met. The response was over whelming.

Tuesday 3rd November 2020.

I received a text from Jan West (Board Director & Chair of the Risk & Audit Committee) "I will miss you enormously you have achieved so much and this is such a debacle."

At 9.45am I received an email from the Australia Post Chair, Lucio, with a copy of the Proof Hansard from the Senate Estimates on 22nd October 2020. I was asked to check it and return any feedback by the close of business the following day (Wednesday) so the organization could meet its deadline. That afternoon I tried to open the document, but it would not open. Tuesday was a public holiday in Melbourne. No one was available to help and would not be until the following day.

At 11.29am Minister Fletcher called me. He sent a text message saying:
"Hi Christine just called to checkin if you're available to speak call me when convenient. Paul Fletcher".

I tried calling back and texted at 12.33pm:
"Paul, apologies I missed your call. I have tried calling back. Let me know when would suit you to speak. Christine"

At 3.42pm Minister Fletcher texted back:
"How's 6pm today to speak"

At 5.21pm I replied "Yes"

The Minister called at 6.00pm. We spoke for about five minutes. The Minister asked how I was, he thanked me for my service, he said he had enjoyed working with me, and said he hoped we kept in touch. I shared how difficult everything had been and how disappointed I was with the situation. I made it clear to Minister Fletcher I was really unhappy.

Wednesday 4th November 2020

Early that morning I called Vicki Ballantyne (who had previously been my Executive Assistant) and let her know I could not open the Hansard. She informed me it had a lock on it, so it could not be opened properly, or printed or forwarded, but I could read it by looking at it in preview. I was not able to simply mark up a copy. The document was 41 pages long in a very small font. To be able to provide feedback in the current format I would have to write out the complete sentences and reference points.

I asked for the Hansard document to be resent in a format I could print out and marked it up. I was told the General Counsel and Acting CEO would not allow it.

I worked very late into the evening going backwards and forwards and preparing a response and could not help but question why it had not been sent to me earlier, or why they could not allow me to have a copy I could print and mark up, after all this was a document that would be public soon.

This behaviour of Australia Post, i.e., giving me unreasonable short deadlines with no respect for any other personal time commitment I may have, or my health, which they were aware had been suffering significantly, is a pattern that has continued unrelentingly.

At 8.45pm I received a letter from Nick MacDonald the General Counsel the company secretary advising me the lawyers leading the investigation would be in touch as they wanted to meet me. I was advised I would be able to get access to files to help me prepare and that Maddocks would be searching through all my emails since joining the organisation.

Thursday 5th November 2020.

I returned the response early in the morning to the Chairman, copying the General Counsel, the Executive General Manager of People and Culture Sue Davies, and others.

I spoke to Sue Davies and shared with her my sincere disappointment that Australia Post would not approve sending out my employee note. So many employees were writing to me and I felt it was disrespectful to both them and myself. It made it look to them like I didn't care about them, and this was extremely distressing to me.

At approximately 1pm my email access is withdrawn.

At approximately 2.30pm my employee note was sent out as Sue Davies had escalated the matter and raised her concerns regarding how unreasonable this was. As Australia Post had cut me off, even employees receiving the email, could not reach out to me.

I am told the organization in their next written communication to our front-line workers, many of whom do not have a company email, ignored my message. They ghosted me to our employees, yet they were very aware thousands of employees were trying to contact me.

Saturday 7th November 2020

At 7.20am I wrote to the Executive General Manager of Transformation and Enablement John Cox and requested some help gaining access to an email that had been prepared for me and some further data, this was all information I previously had, but as my email was cut off, I no longer had access to. I requested it to be able to prepare for the investigation. As noted above, I was told my investigation interview would be held the following week and in previous correspondence from Australia Post, they had confirmed it was John I should expect help from.

Sunday 8th November 2020

I received a phone call from John Cox leaving a message that Rodney Boys had instructed him not to provide me with any information and that any requests should go via our lawyers. It was apparent any help offered to me had not been genuine and I did not get any support from Australia Post through the investigation, other than moral support from Vicki, Sue (both of whom have been extremely professional) and other employees.

Some of the media started to question what had really happened. This is Ronni Salt:

<https://twitter.com/RonniSalt/status/1325347060292354048>

Monday 9th November. 2020

Australia Post attends Senate Estimates. In giving evidence there were numerous times that the Chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo misled the Senate. *Please refer to Section D of this report. I give significant feedback on this issue.* There is clear evidence that the Chair deliberately misled the Senate. I have raised this with numerous stakeholders, including the Chair himself, the Board, the Shareholder Ministers and Maddocks, each time asking for it to be addressed. They have not done so.

At Senate Estimates, The Chair is asked if I had signed a deed of release. Nick MacDonald answers for him, that this has not yet occurred, but implies it will be resolved the next day.

Tuesday 10th November 2020

I receive a letter via email from Australia Post again asking me to sign, committing that I will not make any claim on them or ask for my notice period. They detailed an amount which they said with very little explanation was the statutory amount owed to me. If I signed their letter, as with the previous letter, it would hold me to all my obligations but just not pay me and I would have no recourse in the future. Considering the gross misleading statements I heard at the Senate Estimates the night before, I had no confidence that Australia Post would not continue to defame my character. I did not sign it.

My lawyer sent several briefing papers to Maddocks ahead of my scheduled interview with them the next day. Those notes included my concerns regarding evidence given at the Senate and the events on November 2nd, when I offered to resign but my terms were not accepted and I had no agreement with the Board. (There is no mention in the Maddocks report at all regarding what happened to me when I offered to resign or any of the other significant matters of concern I raised and spoke about.)

Wednesday 11th November 2020 – Friday 20th November 2020

This period is when I was involved with the Maddocks investigation. Please refer to Section H in this report.

Saturday 21st November 2020

I messaged Minister Simon Birmingham and asked for help. My text was at 5.02pm and read:
“Simon, I appreciate you are very busy, would you be able to give me 30 minutes to talk over the next few days? This has been a very difficult time for me and I would like to move forwardly positively. Many Thanks, Christine Holgate. “

Sunday 22nd November 2020

I received a message from Minister Birmingham at 10.27am, it read:
“Hi Christine, I can well appreciate just how difficult it has been. I am happy to have a chat in the coming days. Will come back to you with a time. “

I replied and said:

“Thank you, I would really appreciate it. Can I send an email to you. Christine”

At 12.21pm Minister Birmingham replied:

“Sure – [REDACTED]

Monday 23rd November 2020

At 3.11pm I wrote to Minister Birmingham. **See Appendix 5**

My opening paragraph was:

“Thank you for agreeing to talk with me, I look forward to hearing about your availability. The last four weeks have been exceptionally difficult for me; I feel they have been very unfair and unjust and I have not been treated respectfully or lawfully. I seek your support in now finding a way forward for myself.”

The email is extensive, attaching seven different documents, many of which also shared with Maddocks including:

- “A paper which takes you through the background to Bank@Post, and the events on the 22nd October.
- A summary of the subsequent events with Australia Post after the 22nd October Parliament and being Stood Down.
- A summary of some of the past and inherited governance concerns at Australia Post;
- A copy of my concerns with Australia Post’s evidence on 9th November at Senate Estimates, which I believe is misleading and inaccurate and needs to be corrected. “

Throughout the email I share deep concerns and reflect the depths of my disappointment.

Extracts include:

“I am deeply disappointed with the actions of the Chair. I believe his actions made my position untenable as he continuously disrespected me. I have had no voice throughout this investigation

period, and it is only now that it is finished, do I have an opportunity to address what has happened to me. I ask you to google my name and read what appears and make your own assessment. I strongly believe this is not fair. On the 2nd November at approximately 10.45am, after the most harrowing 10 days of my career; feeling absolutely humiliated and deserted by the Australia Post Chair and as such my position had become untenable, I offered my resignation.”

“I have considerable concerns with how I have been treated, I do not believe it is fair, I feel I have been bullied and humiliated by the Chair, forced to stand down from a role I loved and by evidence was successful in. I have suffered considerable damage to my corporate reputation and health as a consequence.”

I went on to share my disappointment with what happened on the 2nd November and I made it very clear I had not signed any deed of release as the Australia Post’s terms were grossly unfair.

I thanked him for the opportunity to talk.

At 4.06pm I texted Minister Birmingham and said: “Simon, I have sent a confidential email to that address. Thank you. Christine

Tuesday 24th November 2020

At 10.40am, I message Minister Birmingham and say: “Simon, apologies do you have a time we could talk. Minister Fletcher is apparently quoted on the investigation today in the media and I am being inundated with requests. My strong preference is to talk to you. Christine.”

Later that day, I became concerned that I had not heard back from Minister Birmingham and yet the next day, I was due to co-chair with him the Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC) for Trade. I called Minister Birmingham’s mobile.

At 6.10pm Minister Birmingham responded and texted me and said “Sorry Christine I am on other calls at present. I will aim to give you a call about 9am your time tomorrow.”

I replied: “Thank you very much”.

Wednesday 25th November 2020.

Minister Birmingham called me at 9am as committed. We spoke for approximately 45 minutes. I asked Minister Birmingham:

- If he still wanted me to Co-Chair the MAC that afternoon, he confirmed he did;
- His advice regarding the misleading evidence given at Senate Evidence by the Chair. He suggested I could send it to the Chair and Board of Australia Post and ask them to address their evidence and give me an apology. He reminded me this was my decision to make, not his;
- Whether he would meet me to help me get a resolution with Australia Post as it was causing me great anxiety. He suggested that I forward to Minister Fletcher the email I had written to him on the Monday (23rd November 2020) and that he would speak to Minister Fletcher and organise for the three of us to meet to get a resolution;

At 10.15am I wrote to Minister Fletcher and forward to him my email to Minister Birmingham. In my email I explained “Minister Birmingham committed to speak to you this week to see if the three of

us could meet and come back to me before the end of the week, whether and when this could be possible. In return I committed to not take any action until I hear back. I am very happy to travel to come and meet with you both at a place convenient to you. I do appreciate you are both extremely busy, however, I hope you can also appreciate how important to me this matter is to resolve.” **See Appendix 5.**

I received no response from Minister Fletcher.

That afternoon at 2.30pm to 4.30pm I Co-Chaired the Ministerial Advisory Council for Trade, with Minister Andrew Gee, as Minister Birmingham got delayed.

Wednesday December 2nd 2020

Bryan Belling (my Lawyer) wrote to Minister Birmingham and Minister Fletcher.

His letter referred to the draft Maddocks report and stated it:

“identified no breach by Ms Holgate of any Policy and at Finding 6:” *that there was no deliberate dishonesty, fraud, corruption or intentional misuse of Australia Post funds*”. This, together with Ms Holgate’s delegations, lead to the conclusion that she acted at all times within delegation, with propriety and in the corporate interest in what was a celebration of a significant business outcome by reward and recognition.

I am instructed that each of you have, with respect, appropriately conceded that Ms Holgate’s stewardship of, and reforms initiated and achieved at Australia Post are to her credit as is manifest by reference to the business outcomes including taking into account the effect of Covid-19.

In all these circumstances Ms Holgate asks that in order to mitigate any further reputational damage to her that there be steps taken in recognition of my comments as to the merits above. It seems this might be achieved by either release in full of the Report or in the event of other sensitivities in that Report by a public (Ministerial) statement to the following intent:

“The Shareholder Ministers have received the cabinet-in-confidence independent investigation report. The report concluded that Ms Holgate acted at all times honestly, without personal gain and that she did not breach any policy in place in the organisation facilitating the reward and recognition to certain senior executives in celebration of the Bank@Post outcome. Ms Holgate ran the business of Australia Post well and we thank her for her service and wish her well.”

It would be appropriate that such a Statement be published not later than the close of Monday 14 December 2020.

I trust this modest request meets with your joint approval: its publication will assist Ms Holgate in moving on.”

There was no response to this letter.

The same day at 1.06pm I wrote to the Chair and Board of Australia Post. **See Appendix 6.** My note raised the concerns regarding the misleading evidence given to the Senate on November 9th and asked the Board to take appropriate action. I attached a detailed breakdown of where I believe the evidence was misleading or inappropriate with regard to subjects the Chair covered in his evidence, and I offered to give more detail in evidence if it would be helpful. The subjects which had been

falsely reported included whether I agreed to stand down, the Chairman's knowledge of the BCG Report, whether the Chairman had seen the letter to the Ministers on the 31st March before it was sent, who asked for the Executive Bonuses to be reinstated and concerns with his comments in his opening statement when he implied that choosing watches as a reward was wrong and appeared to both create a bias and predetermine the outcome of the investigation. I quoted "You should specifically be aware that I never agreed to stand down from my position, and that there are witnesses to this fact. The Chairman's comments have misled the Government, the Senate, and the Australian public on this issue, as he continues to assert that I agreed to stand down. There was no legal basis for me to stand down, and I had no intention to leave my post as the CEO. I offered to take annual leave to support an investigation and at no point did I agree to stand down or aside."

I also stated: "As we are all aware, I have not signed any variation to my contract with you, nor a deed of release. Despite this, Australia Post is now actively recruiting for a replacement for my role. I suggest that our lawyers discuss a way forward to resolve this. Mr Bryan Belling is copied and acts on my behalf."

Thursday 3rd & Friday 4th December 2020

At 3.59pm on the 3rd December, Bryan Belling received a response to my letter of December 2nd. Australia Post (via Allens their lawyers) did not copy me, even though they are aware at this time that Bryan had left Kingston Reid (where he had previously worked) and was setting up an office from home, where he had kindly offered to still support me, but he was having technical difficulties.

I received the letter on the 4th December. ***See Appendix 7.***

With regard to the misleading evidence at the Senate the Australia Post letter states: "Australia Post intends to follow its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for the hearing and communicating any clarifications to the Committee. It will consider the matters raised by Ms Holgate in the course of that review."

With regard to my request to seek closure on my contract they wrote: "there is no doubt that Ms Holgate's employment came to an end on 2 November 2020 by reason of her resignation."

The letter claimed that because I asked for Allens not to be present in my investigation interview with Maddocks in November that was evident that I had resigned and agreed with them. It is utter nonsense. The words he wrote do not reflect what was recorded by Maddocks or us.

The letter completely ignored any request to get a resolution to the matter, ignored that we had no agreement and was of particular great concern to me as it suggested that the Board would deal with the misleading evidence in their own time.

I sought advice and was told by an ex-Senator that if you give for any reason false information to the Senate and you later become aware it was not accurate, you must update the Senate as soon as reasonably possible. I was extremely disappointed with what felt like a complete disregard for truth and reasonable behaviour.

Saturday 5th December 2020

At 8.18am I messaged Minister Birmingham: "Simon, it is now 10 days since we spoke, I have not heard back. Please will you give me some assistance with Australia Post. I have not signed anything with them. I have asked them please can we resolve it. They are continuing to imply they will hold

me, not release me from my contract obligations as I requested, nor will they pay me. I do not want legal action, but I increasingly feel I have no option. I believe I have acted fairly. Please can you help. Christine”

There was no response.

I realised that the matter was now being blanked out. I called my lawyer and asked for advice. Candidates for my role are openly being discussed in newspapers, surely the Board wants an amicable resolution, I asked him.

I would like the committee to remember that at this stage I was seeking no financial compensation at all from Australia Post, I just wanted the respect to move forward.

I was extremely disappointed.

Tuesday 8th December 2020

Bryan Belling wrote to Simon Dewberry from Allens, who is representing the Board of Australia Post. In his letter he acknowledged the letter sent to us on the 4th December and reminded Allens it is now four weeks since Australia Post gave misleading evidence at the Senate and Parliament remained misled. Bryan again sought closure on my contract:

“Ms Holgate’s employment was rendered untenable by the actions (and indeed, the inactions) of The Chairman of Australia Post

The employment relationship, but not the employment contract, may have ended.

Australia Post admitted on the 9th November 2020, when giving evidence at Senate Estimates, that it had not signed any agreement with Ms Holgate. Ms Holgate has given no release. Ms. Holgate received a letter on November 10th, 2020 stating what her statutory entitlements were and it was requested she signed the letter and returned it. There was no proper explanation how these were calculated. She did not sign the agreement, nor did she support it or return it. All other things being equal, post-employment obligations still apply. The very fact that Australia Post has not honoured the contract, would suggest they are in breach.

Ms Holgate under the contract of employment is subject to certain restraints. Restrictions on Ms Holgate’s ability to work, which absent payment as contractually contemplated, would constitute an unreasonable restraint of her trade. As such the options appear to be:

- Payment in consideration for restraining her competition; or
- A release from those restraints which restrict her ability to earn a living.

It would be appropriate to come to terms with respect to these issues as soon as practicable and in any event before 10th December 2020.”

Wednesday 9th – Friday 11th December 2020

In the evening of the 9th December Bryan Belling received an email from Allens acting on behalf of Australia Post. It had two attachments totalling 45 pages, the majority of which was in six point font. The email said Australia Post wanted to make lists of corporate credit card costs over my 3-year tender public, and they wanted my approval, but I would have the opportunity to provide any

explanation or comments. They gave me until close of business on Thursday 10th. Allens once again did not copy me, even though I continued to ask Australia Post to do so. They were very aware Bryan was having problems with his internet and he may not see correspondence. Bryan saw the email on Friday the 11th and forwarded it to me at 5.20pm. I read the list and became deeply concerned as I felt it was misleading how the costs were being presented. The document appeared to imply all the costs in the office of the CEO were mine personally. They were not. I had never seen the expenses before, they were managed by both my Assistant and the CFO, who is now the Acting CEO. Again, as they had with the Hansard weeks earlier, they had put a lock on the documents so no explanatory comments could easily be completed and again I was expected to meet an unreasonable time frame, which they had clearly sat on for weeks before their request to me. I objected.

(Please note that in September 2020, Vicki Ballantyne and I worked tirelessly to be able to give a detailed breakdown of my expenses for the previous year. The exercise was exasperated due to the lockdowns in Victoria. We shared this with the Chair, Tony Nutt and the General Counsel. The organisation chose to give a much shortened summary view. I have always been very open for someone to review my expenses; I have asked though they fairly reflect the owner e.g. Under the Office of the CEO lunches for Board meetings were classified as CEO lunch, giving the appearance I was out having lavish lunches, I was not).

Monday 14th December 2020

I reached out to Vicki (my previous Executive Assistant) and asked for help. We noticed that some of the expenses appeared wrong as they included charges that I had personally paid. The response was: "I checked with Rodney and he has confirmed that these expenses do not include your credits as they were paid after the cut-off date. He said if you needed further details re this that Nick is best to speak to."

As Nick refused to speak to me and I was told I had to address all questions to him via their lawyers, it was clear securing any reasonable help was not going to be forthcoming.

Tuesday 15th December 2020

I wrote to a lawyer at Australia Post and ask why had the costs been changed and coded as if they were my personal expenses at 15.28pm. I ask for help and for Vicki to have access to the file so we can make comments as I cannot open it. I offer to speak the next day. I hear nothing back.

Wednesday 16th December 2020

I write to the Australia Post lawyer again and follow up and again ask for Vicki to have access to the document if they would not allow me to. No response.

7.38pm Bryan Belling receives the first of three letters Allens advised they would send regarding me. Again, I am not copied.

The first of these letters states:

"Senate Estimates

I refer to my letter dated 3 December 2020 and confirm that Australia Post is following its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for the Senate Estimates hearing on 9 November 2020 and Australia Post will consider the matters raised by Ms Holgate in its review.

Post-employment restraints

Australia Post does not agree with your assertion that the post-employment restraints that apply to Ms Holgate are unenforceable in the absence of a payment to her. “

This response is very peculiar. On October 23rd, the day following the events in parliament, the Chair felt compelled to both update the Senate and make a press release immediately, to report I had wrongly estimated the cost of the watches; but by now it was over five weeks since the Chair misled the Senate and no one felt compelled to address his errors or put out a media release on it.

Secondly, this note confirms that Australia Post was attempting to hold me to all restraints with no payment, which would in effect mean I would not be able to work for 12 months without pay, even though they had no signed agreement with me. This is grossly unreasonable.

At 7.46pm the second letter was sent to Bryan. This letter was an offer to release me after May 2nd 2021 (i.e. 6 months) if in return I agreed to no financial compensation at all and it “releases the Australia Post companies and their officers and employees from all legal claims relating to her employment and the termination of her employment.” This offer was valid until 24th December 2020.

I did not accept this offer as we deemed it both unreasonable and as we had no visibility of what Australia Post was going to say about me with regard to the investigation, it felt extremely risky to trust them when they had demonstrated no good faith to this point. No one from the Board including the Chair tried to talk to me about this, yet they knew I actively wanted to resolve this amicably and I reported to them. All correspondence had to be done through the lawyers.

The Chair did not contact me. After all the work I had done for the organisation, this felt extremely insulting.

Thursday 17th December 2020

At 8.07am I received the third letter which is in relation to the credit card expenses request. It in effect says Australia Post does not accept my requests to protect and correct certain information or give me access to information so I can reasonably give an explanation. Instead, it offers “Ms Holgate has until 4pm on Thursday 17 December 2020 to make any submissions that the Summaries are exempt from access under the FOI Act”

This document is in total 45 pages long, with the majority in font 6 and covers expenses, most of which are not all mine. Yet I am given again an extremely unreasonable short time to address with virtually no access to any resources. I am again expected to stop what I may have had planned and complete their work.

I spoke with Bryan Belling and he wrote to Allens. “The over-arching point being the records as those now present are misleading in material respects. Consequently, our challenge, if not our duty, in respect of each of our clients is do what is reasonable to ensure that record, when published, does not mislead. To that end Ms Holgate remains prepared to go through the material, line by line, to facilitate that explanation a process she attempted to undertake as we understood it by liaison with Mr Mackenzie at Post.”

I write to Sue Davies and Nick MacDonald, copying Andrea Staines and Tony Nutt from the main Board (as I had been advised Andrea and Tony had been appointed to lead the “Christine” matter). I

say, "I write seeking your urgent support" The letter asks for help to complete the exercise properly, provide access to some of the data and to reasonable be able to add comments. I reiterate my strong desire to help"

Friday 18th December 2020

At 4.58pm Australia Post wrote to Bryan Belling (again not copying me). "I have decided to grant access to the table containing all relevant information pertaining to all purchases made on: (a) the credit card held in the name of chief executive Christine Holgate; and (b) the credit card held in the name of the "Office of CEO", for the period between 1 October 2017 and 31 August 2020 (the **Disclosed Information**)".

We later found out that I had a right to this, but Australia Post appeared to have been deliberately misleading me.

Saturday 19th December 2020

Bryan Belling forwarded the letter to me. There was no deadline of when this was required to be completed, this was now the week prior to Christmas. Over the coming weeks I became increasingly disappointed by Australia Post actions towards me, where I was regularly sent spread sheets with locks on, I was given unreasonable periods of time to review items and expected to be able to review significant documents, with very little help.

Friday 8th January 2021 and going forward

Australia Post Director Tony Nutt and I had an extensive call lasting for more than three hours. Tony had sought permission from the Board to have this call with me. He agreed to talk to me after I shared with Sue Davies how grossly unfair I felt Australia Post had treated me. I had offered to do the right thing, but Australia Post had abused my trust, misled the public and the Government and the Parliament about me, refused to defend me personally, caused me to incur significant legal costs, left me without support despite knowing of my poor mental state, and made no serious attempt to resolve my release from the organisation among other issues. I also complained to him of the unreasonable deadlines I had been given to comply with requests for information.

Over the coming weeks Tony supported me securing more reasonable deadlines to some of the onerous tasks Australia Post kept asking of me, even though I was not employed there.

However, no resolution to my contract has ever been made, despite all the requests I made to the Board and the Government to help do so.

I am aware that the Licensed Post Offices, customers, business supporters, employees and leading journalists have all raised this issue.

Conclusion

I have never signed a deed of release.

Throughout this whole process I have been treated very unfairly. I believe I have been victimized and that my reputation and career "thrown under the bus" without justification to save the reputations and careers of others.

For all of this I blame one person. I am deeply disappointed with the actions of the Chairman as I believe his actions were unlawful and he made my position completely untenable. He refused to intervene on my behalf even when he knew that the accusations against me were false. No Chief Executive can work in a situation where their Chairman abandons them in this way. He did not enter this process in good faith, has demonstrated a lack of respect and duty of care to me and our organization, he has broken proper process at every critical point and made my position regrettably untenable, which as a consequence, my health significantly suffered. I am also disappointed with the actions of the Board, as they knew he acted unlawfully by standing me down, they knew he misled the Senate and they knew I was being treated unfairly and yet they have protected him and abandoned me.

D, The veracity of evidence provided by the Chair of Australia Post to the Environment & Communications Legislation Committee, during an estimates hearing on 9th November 2020;

Summary:

On 9 November 2020, the Chair of Australia Post made several serious misleading and factually incorrect statements, whilst addressing the Senate. I have raised my concerns on this issue with numerous stakeholders, including the Chair and the Board, both current Shareholder Ministers and Maddocks. To date no one has responded that my concerns are wrong and yet no one has addressed the evidence supplied to support my concerns and to my knowledge the Parliament remains misled.

Background:

This section of my submission gives details on just three of the topics covered at the Senate hearing on 9 November 2020 and provides evidence pointing to the inaccuracy of the statements provided by the Chair, the Acting CEO and the General Counsel in relation to:

- The BCG Review
- The CEO standing aside
- Chair & Board Approval of the letter to the Ministers seeking help on 31st March 2020.

There are several other important matters I believed the Chair misled the parliament that evening, I have not covered them here, but I am willing to provide more details if it would be helpful to the committee.

I raised my concerns regarding the Chair's evidence on the 9th November 2020b with Maddox's and subsequently on the 11th November 2020 when being interviewed. They chose to exclude this from their report.

I also raised my concerns regarding the evidence as documented in **See Appendix 5.** with Minister Birmingham and Minister Fletcher, with both of whom I shared a detailed account of my concerns.

I wrote to the Chair, the General Counsel and the whole Board on the 2nd December, and asked that they consider their evidence. **See Appendix 6.**

I received a reply from Australia Post lawyers on the 3rd December stating ("The first issue raised by Ms Holgate is a concern about the accuracy of certain evidence given by the Chairman and other representatives of Australia Post during their appearance at the Senate Estimates hearing on 9 November 2020. Australia Post intends to follow its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for the hearing and communicating any clarifications to the Committee. It will consider the matters raised by Ms Holgate in the course of that review." **See Appendix 7.**

Australia Post addressed their inaccuracies on December 21st 2020 in a letter to the Chair of the Senate Committee. This letter is available publicly. **See Appendix 8.** However, the Australia Post submission on December 21st fails to address the considerable inaccuracies I raised with the Chair and Board, the Shareholder Ministers and Maddocks who led the investigation for the Government.

The Maddocks report into Governance issues at Australia Post fails to acknowledge at all any of the significant concerns I raised with them and the Shareholder Ministers.

The inaccurate and misleading statements remain on record and to this date I have received no meaningful response to my concerns that the Chair of Australia Post misled the senate. If the Chair was forgetful at the Senate hearing on November 9th, but had no intention to mislead the senate, why was his evidence never properly redressed?

If my concerns did not fairly reflect the truth, why was this never addressed with me? There is considerable evidence to substantiate my concerns and witnesses to the events I recorded, but no one has ever acknowledged this, or apologized to me over the misleading statements and subsequent damage to my reputation and mental health.

Finally, on October 23rd 2020 the Board of Australia Post made two public statements in order to first immediately correct an estimate of the cost of the four watches I had made at Senate Estimates the day before and the second to correct a comment recorded in the media from the previous Chair that implied the whole board had approved the purchase. Both statements reiterated from the Chair his intent to immediately address any possible errors in reporting of facts and one highlights the importance of checking the Hansard. In light of this, why did it then take the Chair over six weeks to attempt to address his evidence and to this day has not addressed many of the significant concerns raised by myself.

Misleading Statements: BCG Report: Had the Chair seen and been involved in it?

The Chair gave evidence at Senate Estimates on the 9th November regarding seeing a draft of the BCG report.

The Chair was asked at Senate Estimates several times had he seen the BCG report. He repeatedly denied it and went on to say he believed the CEO had also not seen it. Yet, there are numerous occasions when the Chair did see a copy of the report and he was very involved with its preparation. In fact, all the Board were significantly briefed on the BCG review, all of the Executive Team contributed, and the Chair particularly played an important role in concluding it. This is widely known and yet the Senate is misled.

The Hansard on record for 9th November 2020 with regard to the BCG Review:

- Page 52 The Chair in response to a question by Senator Green on engaging BCG says “We haven’t seen the report”
- Page 54 Senator Green questions “You haven’t seen a copy of the report”. The Chair responds “No”
- Page 54 Senator Green asks Did the former Chair see a copy of the report? The Chair responds “No I do not believe so”

Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG:

1st November 2019 on the announcement by the two shareholder Ministers of the appointment of Lucio De Bartolomeo as new Chair of Australia Post the statement said “To inform the incoming Chair and further inform the Board and Chief Executive Officer, in addition to Australia Post’s existing Corporate Plan 2023, the Australian Government has appointed management consulting firm BCG to conduct a review of Australia Post’s strategy to operate as a sustainable and fit-for-purpose service provider for the longer term. This review will consider broader market conditions such as growth in e-commerce, the regulatory environment, and changes in business and consumer needs. The review is expected to report back to Government in early 2020. This report is referred to as the BCG report or BCG review.

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5th December 2019, an update on the BCG review is given at the Australia Post Board meeting.

16th December 2019, (although received 16th January 2020) the reference terms for the BCG review are shared with Australia Post and these terms reference the request for a special dividend from Australia Post to cover the cost. This is sent to the Chair.

29th January 2020 the Chair receives from the CEO a copy of the interim BCG report and a copy of Australia Post's feedback.

31st January 2020 Stacie Hall, the First Assistant Secretary in Finance, sent the Chair a draft final BCG report, copying the CEO and others.

31st January 2020 the CEO and the Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo meet to discuss the review and prepare for the upcoming Board meeting.

2nd February 2020 the CEO sends the Chair a briefing pack on the BCG review ahead of their meeting on the 4th February.

4th February 2020 the Chair and the CEO travel to Canberra to meet with BCG at the Department of Finance, with members of the Finance and Communications Departments to discuss the report.

19th February 2020 the Chair received a Board presentation prepared by the Finance Department and BCG, which summarised the report, from the CEO.

20th February 2020 the Australia Post Board Portal was updated with a copy of the BCG presentation on the findings of the review.

20th February 2020 BCG with members of the Department of Finance (and members of the Department of Communications present), presented for several hours at a 5hour Australia Post Board meeting on their findings. McKinseys also attended this meeting. The CFO, Rodney Boys and now Acting CEO was present throughout the meeting.

21st February 2020 Stacey Hall, the First Assistant Secretary in Finance emails the Chair "a Final Draft of the BCG's report, which departments will present to Shareholder Ministers.", copying the CEO. A copy of the cover note is **attached in Appendix 9**.

8th July 2020 The CEO (myself) gave evidence at the Senate Inquiry "Future of Australia Post Service Delivery", that I had been involved in the preparation and seen a final draft of the report, as did the General Counsel, Nick MacDonald. The Senate Estimates Hansard was signed off by the General Counsel.

14th August 2020 the Chair writes to the CEO and says:

On 14/8/20, 5:25 pm, "Lucio Di Bartolomeo" [REDACTED] wrote:

Expecting this email? If suspicious forward it
to [REDACTED]

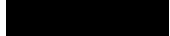
Hi Christine

Had my regular teleconference with Andrew Jaggers and Stacy this afternoon re Aust Post. Andrew asked if we were dealing with request for the special dividend to cover the cost of BCG

Review. I just had a quick look at the papers currently down loaded and could see our standard 65% of Profit After tax but saw nothing yet re the special dividend. The request for this dividend is very unusual but only \$1.5 mil. We were going to pay in March but we were given relief after our early concern of financial position. Given the the very different result achieved we should now pay the special dividend. There is an important parallel that won't go unnoticed.

Lucio

Lucio Di Bartolomeo



Sent from my iPad

The Acting CEO and the General Counsel were also at the hearing on 9th November 2020 and they did not correct the evidence provided by the Chair, even though they both knew that he had been extensively involved in the completion of the BCG Report.

Following the hearing, I shared with many stakeholders that the Chair's evidence was misleading and gave me significant concerns. Please reference points above.

The General Counsel wrote to the Chair of the Senate Committee on the 21st December 2020 (*a copy of the letter is **attached in Appendix 8***) The letter addresses the Chair's evidence on the 9th November 2020 regarding the BCG report, it states: 'an Australia Post witness advised the committee that Australia Post had not seen the report arising from the review. To clarify, Australia Post did not see a final report but was provided a draft report during the later stages of the review.'

Conclusion:

The BCG review was organized to inform the Chair, CEO and Board. The organization paid for it and we were aware of the expectation to pay from it since December 2019. The Chair, the CEO, the CFO, several members of the Executive Team and the General Counsel were extensively involved with the report. The CEO and Executives questioned BCG's findings and did not support significant elements of the report raising concerns over the potential impacts of the recommendations. Yet, on the evening of November 9th 2020 the Chair denied seeing it multiple times, he was not corrected by either the Acting CEO or General Counsel on the evening; nor did they update the Senate when they reviewed the Hansard. The corrected evidence put forward by the General Counsel on 21st December claims they were "provided a draft report during the later stages of the review"; **despite knowing the strong evidence that they had seen multiple copies; had met multiple times with BCG and the Departments; the Board had been regularly updated and there had been a Board meeting to discuss the final findings.** In my opinion the Australia Post statement on the 21st December remains grossly misleading in contrast to the extensive involvement by the Chair and the Executives.

"Did the CEO Agree to Stand Down?"

Summary:

The Chair stated at Senate Estimates on 9th November 2020 that I agreed to stand down. **No evidence has ever been provided to substantiate this, even though the lawyers representing me have requested it several times. There is considerable evidence and witnesses that I did not agree.** The Chair of Australia Post unlawfully stood me down.

Findings:

On the 9th November at 9.01pm, the Australia Post Chair at Senate Estimates in response to several questions by Senator Nita Green, claimed several times that I had agreed to stand aside/down.

He said:

“We spoke to her several times and she ultimately agreed to stand aside”.

“We had a number of conversations with her that afternoon and the concluding position was she would stand aside”

He stated the Board met before Australia Post made the announcement on the 22nd October at approximately 7pm, and they agreed I should stand aside. He also stated a letter was sent to me as I had elected to stand aside confirming this position, when asked by Senator Green whether this position was legally correct.

- Page 73 of the Hansard in response to a question by Senator Green asking did he agree with the Minister that I would stand aside, the Chair replied “We agreed to bring the board together and consider that position”
- Page 73 of the Hansard on record in response to a question by Senator Green, “did you do that?”, the Chair replied “The Board did come together and we did consider the decision. We had discussions with Christine and ultimately she agreed that she would stand aside while the investigation took place”
- Page 73 Senator Green asked did a special meeting of the Board take place on the same day, the chair replied “Yes”.
- Page 73 Senator Green asks whether the Board meeting on the 22nd October was for this purpose. The Chair replied it was called specifically for this purpose.
- Page 73 Senator Green goes on to ask did the Chair speak to other Directors before the meeting etc. The Chair replies ‘we met that afternoon’.
- Page 73 Senator Green refers to the Chair having made a statement on the 22nd October, the same day, and asks did he and Ms. Holgate mutually come to the decision to stand aside. The Chair replies “We had a number of conversations that afternoon and the concluding position was that she would stand aside.
- Page 74 Senator Green asks the Chair was there anything in writing that formalized this position. The Chair replies “Yes”.
- Page 74 the General Counsel answers that there was a letter to me recording that position.
- Page 74 When asked by Senator Green what their legal basis was to stand me aside. The Chair replied “she elected to stand aside.”

The events on the 22nd October following Senate Estimates.

- Following my evidence at Senate Estimates, the Chair, called me at around 1.30pm and told me, he had received a call from Minister Fletcher and that the Minister had requested that I be stood down whilst an investigation into the watch purchases took place. He said he had asked the Minister whether he (the Chair) could lead the investigation.

I explained the watches were bought two years ago, in recognition of Bank@Post and they were approved by the Chair at the time, and I had not done anything wrong. I told the Chair I could provide him with evidence that the previous Chair had approved them as he had written a personal thank you note in a card with me for every recipient. I told the Chair I did not want to step down, but I would absolutely support any investigation and if I had done something wrong, I would take responsibility. The Chair left the call as he had an incoming call from Minister Fletcher but committed to call me back.

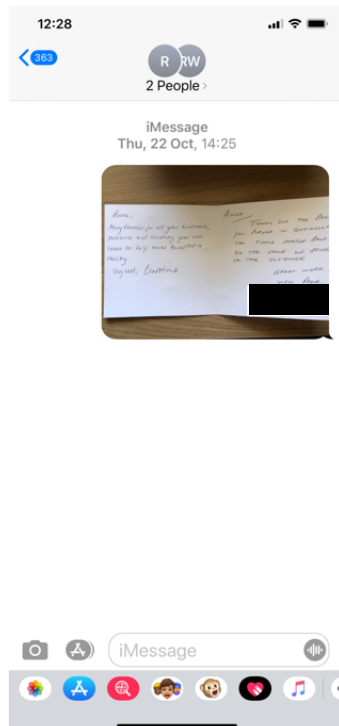
- Around this time I spoke with Australia Post Director Tony Nutt and asked him his advice. I do not have the precise time of this call. Tony asked me what were the comparison costs of the CEO & Office of CEO & Board costs under Ahmed and myself?
- I texted Tony Nutt at 1.34pm and said "Tony the comparison costs between our expenses, i.e. CEO, CEO Office and Board are \$17 million vs \$6.4 million". This information had been prepared by the CFO. I then texted Tony Nutt and asked him to call.
- One of the recipients of the watches, called me and said another recipient had kept their accompanying card and sent me a photo of the messages inside. The message from the previous Chair clearly indicated this was a reward for the tremendous work and result on Bank@Post. John Stanhope signed it off as "Chair of AP". I received the text of a photo of the card at 2.17pm.

To: Deanne K

Thu, 22 Oct, 14:17



- The Chair called me and said he had spoken to the Minister again and he was insistent that I must stand down and be investigated. I questioned the Chair whether he had spoken to anyone else on the Board, had he told the Minister I had evidence they were approved by the previous Chair, and that I had done no wrong? I emphasized I did not want to step down as it would cause chaos just as they were entering the Christmas Peak, but I did offer to take annual leave and support an investigation. The Chair left the call.
- At 2.23pm I forwarded the photograph of the signed card to Tony Nutt, Michael Ronaldson (Board Director) and the Chair. Both Tony Nutt and Michael Ronaldson sent returned text messages acknowledging they had received it.
- I forwarded the photo to Richard Windyear, the Deputy Secretary of Communications and Ryan Bloxson, the Chief of Staff to Paul Fletcher. Richard Windyear was present at the Senate Estimates hearing and was in his role at the time of the Bank@Post agreements. They received the photograph at 2.25pm. A copy of the text to Ryan and Richard is below.



- Minister Paul Fletcher was photographed in Parliament with his iPad, which he uses to receive messages.
- At approximately 2.38pm Minister Paul Fletcher addressed Parliament and said I would be investigated and stood down.
- At 2.42pm the Prime Minister addressed parliament and saying if I don't step down, I can go.
- The Prime Minister announced an independent review into the conduct of the board members and their governance, as well as the actions of the management and executive. The Prime Minister stated that if there are issues to be addressed with Board members then they will be addressed then.
- At no point did either Minister Paul Fletcher or the Prime Minister in their addresses to Parliament acknowledge the watch reward occurred two years ago, for securing the largest investment into the Community Post Offices or that they had been approved by the previous Chair.
- At no point prior to his comments in Parliament did Minister Paul Fletcher call me and give me any opportunity to explain, the background and the correct position, even though previously we had a strong working relationship whereby I met with him monthly. Indeed, the day before this incident the Minister and Prime Minister at a News Ltd conference publicly acknowledged Australia Post's strong leadership through COVID. As context the Board gave me a 95% rating (compared to a target of 70%, demonstrating our strong performance) in my scorecard for FY20 as evidenced in the annual report. At no stage through my three year tenure have any performance issues been raised with me.
- Their approach to me was in complete contrast to how they have treated people in their own party or who had paid \$30m for a piece of land which was valued at \$3m. I was being

“hung” for rewarding 4 outstanding executives for delivering a landmark agreement, which saved many Community Post Offices. An agreement their colleague, Josh Frydenberg had played a strong role in.

- Straight after the incident my husband organized and paid personally for a car to collect me and drive me back to my Sydney home. Sue Davies, the Executive General Manager People & Culture travelled back with me to Sydney in the car, she is a key witness to all events that afternoon as she was with me at all times.
- **I did NOT speak to the Chair that afternoon at all** following the traumatic events of Question Time. I did speak to and communicate with Tony Nutt numerous times. It is highly important to note that Tony Nutt in fact suggested that I prepare a brief statement saying I would take annual leave and support an investigation. I took this advice as it was consistent with my previous commitment. I sent Tony a number of drafts and communicated with him on his feedback on each draft. I think he was genuinely interested in helping me resolve this situation in a sensible way.
- My first email draft of this statement was sent to Tony Nutt was at 5.14pm and read: “I have done no wrong. I welcome an investigation. I have asked the Chair for approval to take two weeks annual leave to enable an investigation to be conducted promptly. The items involved were a recognition for 4 managers who had worked tirelessly to deliver a landmark agreement for our Post Offices. I did not receive anything personally. They were approved by the previous Chair of the Board; they were declared and Fringe Benefits Tax was paid. Christine”.
- The second email draft was at 5.49pm, headed Draft Copy and read: “I have done no wrong. I welcome an investigation. I have offered to the Chair to take two weeks annual leave to enable an investigation to be conducted promptly. Christine”
- The third email draft was at 6.03pm, headed FW: Draft Copy and read: “I have done nothing wrong. I welcome an investigation. I have offered to the Chair to take annual leave to enable an investigation to be conducted promptly. Christine”
- The fourth email draft was at 6.35pm, headed ‘Are you ok for me to say this’ and read: “I have done nothing wrong. I welcome an investigation. I have offered to the Chair to take annual leave to enable an investigation to be conducted promptly. Christine”.
- In addition there are seven text messages between Tony Nutt and I that afternoon.
- The direct communication that journey home between the Chair and I was two emails. The first at 5.53pm on the recommendation of Tony Nutt, in which I formally requested annual leave. It read: “I would like to take two weeks annual leave immediately to enable you to undertake an investigation. Please will you let me know if you will approve. Christine”. This email was never responded to in writing.
- The second communication was at 7.04pm when I forwarded to the Chair a copy of an email someone had written to Ministers Paul Fletcher and Matthias Cormann questioning their decision to investigate me.
- The Chair did speak to Sue Davies whilst we were travelling back. Sue explained to him that I was very disappointed with what had happened, and I was talking to Tony Nutt.

- I received several messages from concerned supporters of mine stating they believed the Prime Minister was probably not properly briefed and to remain calm.
- I arrived home between 7.00-7.30pm. I agreed with my husband that I would make no statement that evening as I was exhausted.
- At no point did the Chair speak to me that afternoon or evening regarding the matter. This can be verified by Sue Davies who was with me at all times.
- It later became apparent that at approximately 7pm that evening the Chair made a media statement stating the CEO would “stand aside” whilst an investigation took place. **See Appendix 10**
- I was not consulted on the words of the Australia Post media statement, nor was I informed by Australia Post prior to the statement being made.
- At 8.22pm the Chair wrote an “all employee message” stating Minister Paul Fletcher announced a formal investigation into the gifts. It noted the CEO would stand aside whilst the investigation took place. **See Appendix 11.** I was not consulted on this message.
- The employee email is evidence that the brief of the investigation had changing. It was no longer into the governance of the Board, it was now about the gifting of the watches. They were not gifts, they were rewards. No where in this message does the Chair give any indication into why these rewards were made, implying that the recipients and I had done something wrong.
- On the **afternoon of 22nd October** Minister Fletcher and Senator Cormann put out a joint statement stating they were surprised to learn about the gifts and that they had instructed the departments to conduct a formal investigation. **There was no mention in this statement, that the gifts were two years ago, for securing Bank@Post, that they had received evidence of the Chair’s support at the time, that they were aware the Fringe Benefit Tax had been paid and that they had properly been accounted for. Minister Fletcher’s office was aware of all these facts.**
- During my journey in the car back to Sydney 22 October, Mr. John Stanhope (the previous Chair) called me. He said a journalist from the *Australia Financial Review* had called him but he did not know what they were talking about, so he simply answered, I do not know anything about it. Mr. Stanhope and I spoke about the watches and Bank@Post. I told Mr. Stanhope about the photograph of the card we both had written. The next day he was quoted in the *Australia Financial Review* as saying he does remember, although he was not sure it was watches, but all the board knew about a reward and approved and he thinks he popped his head into a morning tea, but it is not in his diary for that day.

Friday 23rd October (the day following)

- I called the Chair at 8.01am. He stated that he would not be able to accept my annual leave request and that I would need to step down whilst an investigation was undertaken. I asked, what would this mean? He said he would get a letter to me that afternoon detailing everything. He told me I would not be required to attend the Board meeting that day. I did not receive any letter that day.

- The Australia Post policy is that for an individual to be 'stood down' whilst an investigation into any potential wrongful behaviour takes place, they have to pose a serious threat or health risk to the organization or an individual in the organisation. For there to be a legal basis to step down an individual the individual either has to pose a serious threat or agree to stand down in writing. I neither presented a serious threat nor did I agree to step down in writing.
- I believe that Allens advised the Board that Friday that the steps taken by the Chair that day were not lawful. He did not have a right to stand me down without my written approval. I ask the committee to ask Allens for a copy of the advice they presented to the Board.
- I was inundated with media and television reporters. Several turning up at my home, calling my mobile etc. I shared with Australia Post that I found it a very distressing experience.
- Tony Nutt (Director) called me to check on my welfare. I told him I was disappointed to find out that the Chair had put out incorrect and misleading announcements to the media and to our employees without consulting with me. During our conversation it became evident that Tony Nutt had also not been informed of these announcements prior to them being made.
- Commentary began to leak to media outlets that I had excessive expenses for the Office of the CEO. Including that she spent over \$800k on plants – which no one would qualify that they were part of an agreement she inherited and that they covered 25 buildings, housing more than 25,000 of our employees and were part of our strategy to secure green star rating; or that the CFO and now Acting CEO was responsible for both approving the Office of the CEO costs and he was directly responsible for the plants.
- Rodney Boys sends an all employee email. The only acknowledgement of myself was 'Christine will stand aside whilst an investigation is conducted by Shareholder departments into the gifts to four senior managers.' No explanation of the reason why these rewards were given. No explanation of the incredible achievement of Bank@Post. But again, the rewards started to be called gifts and the investigation appeared changed to that announced by the Prime Minister. I hope the committee can understand reading this why my lawyer and I began to feel the investigation was not one into governance, but one to justify the attack on me.
- Later that day on the 23rd October 2020, Australia Post made two public statements. The first release stated that the Board had checked the minutes and the Board papers for the 18th October 2020 Board meeting and noted they did not include any request for them to approve the watches as gifts. What was very surprising about this release was that the Chair did not speak to the former Chair, Mr. Stanhope, the Company Secretary at the time, two other Board members who were there at the Board meeting, any of the four recipients of the watches or myself, before he made this statement. At no point did I state the Board had approved them, the purchase of these rewards was within my authority and it would be highly unusual as a CEO to seek approval for an expense of this nature from the Board. I did however have the approval and support of the previous Chairman.
- The second release corrected the price of the watches and that FBT had been paid.
- At no point did the organization put out any release giving clarity on why the gifts were awarded or any background into the Bank@Post opportunity.

- Other than Tony Nutt, to whom I am very grateful for his support, no Board member or the Chair contacted me on that day.
- I ended the day devastated. The Chair and Board knew I was extremely disappointed. I
- I was also disappointed in the lack of open support from the many ministers whom I had worked with. I had not only led Australia Post, I supported the Government across many other activities as I strongly believe in the importance of service to our country. I Chair the Australian ASEAN Council for Minister Payne, I co-chaired the Ministerial Advisory Board for Trade, with Minister Birmingham, I was a member of Brand Australia under Andrew Forrest's leadership, I had been one of two reviewers for the Foreign export grants programme and I had worked closely with the Health Minister, Greg Hunt, to ensure medicines were delivered to the elderly and vulnerable at home.

Saturday 24th October.

- Tony Nutt called me early in the morning to check in on me. He told me to remain calm and to not do anything hastily.
- As the morning progressed, the requests and commentary in the media increased. There was a cartoon of me depicting me as a prostitute in the *Australia Financial Review*. I was deeply offended and extremely distressed and shared this with Australia Post. The organization took no action to address the misleading statements or to defend me in anyway yet they were fully aware of the extent of degrading reporting.



- The Licensed Post Offices, employees and customers continued to send numerous messages of hope. However, with all the significant negative media, constant mistruths and no support from the Chair, I shared that I found the experience very disturbing. **Please see the section titled Voices.**
- Sue Davies organized for the me to have EAP assistance as I was highly stressed and in a deep state of shock.

- The Chair did not contact me that day and I did not receive any letter from the organization.

Sunday 25th October.

- Sue Davies sent me the letter from Australia Post.
- Marcus Blackmore (my previous Chair in my position as CEO at Blackmores) organised for me to meet with his lawyer Bryan Belling the next day and speak to a mental health therapist, who I did speak to.
- Sue Davies called me and shared with me that she had called the Chair and expressed her disappointment in how I had been treated and she suggested he call me.
- The Chair called me although on the advice of my therapist I did not pick up. I did message him though at 1.10pm saying: "Lucio my apologies I have not picked up. I am trying to preserve my mental wellbeing. I am aware Sue has sent the letter. I will read it. As ever I will support the organization in any way I can. Christine"
- The Chair replied by text saying: "Christine you have nothing to apologise for. I was calling to see how you are. I can't envisage how difficult this is for you after all you have done for Aust. Post. Can we provide you with any assistance? Christine, just remember there are many of us who hold you in the highest regard and always will. Do what is best for you and call whenever you want. Lucio."

Monday 26th October 2020.

- At 1.31am I message Sue Davies "I am so low" I have sent you an email. Included in that email I write "Sue I have woken up to streams of messages of support. But I am seriously struggling. 'I am deeply stressed. I have never felt this low and publicly threatened in all my life' "I am losing all my strength. I am absolutely shattered. I can not sleep,. I have those pains in my chest. I do not want to live like this' Please will you help me"
- I read the Australia Post letter sent to me. It was headed "**Your Agreement to stand aside pending investigation**". **See Appendix 12.**
- The letter stated that the Shareholder had raised serious concerns in relation to the watches decision and has expressed a view that I should stand aside pending an investigation.
- The letter goes on to say that I had agreed to stand aside effective Thursday afternoon. This was not true.
- The letter informed me that whilst I would have access to my emails I was not to speak to any employees or directors other than Sue Davies or John Cox.
- I spoke with Tony Nutt that morning and told him I was very stressed and disappointed and could not believe I had received a letter from Lucio that effectively said the Shareholder had told the Board to stand me aside. I believe my conversation with Tony made it evident the Board members had not approved the letter before it was sent to me.

- That evening I went to see a Doctor who prescribed me with medication and ordered me to take immediate leave and not to engage at all on the matter. I gave a copy of the doctor's orders to Australia Post.
- The Licensed Post Offices (LPO's) began a campaign, called *#westandbyChristine* and *#wesupportourCEO*. They were encouraging people to send \$5 notes to the Prime Minister and asking for me to be returned to office. The LPO's planned a closure for Wednesday 28th October out of mourning. They went on to national television, radio and extensively engaged with press.
- That afternoon I was removed from all emails sharing any updates on the organisation's performance. This suggested to me that the leave was not genuine as if the Chair had wanted me to return, he surely would have wanted me to be kept across and updated on the issues.
- I believe the Board met that day and were aware of my health concerns.
- That evening (19.41am) Lucio messages me and says happy to catch up when you want if you want. Very much your decision. Just take care of yourself. It's all I am interested in. Thinking of you."
- My doctor strongly recommended I do not respond.

Tuesday 27th October.

- I wrote to Australia Post at 7.22am and asked that they correct the inaccuracies in the media and stated "the story is still running and it is so misleading. We are being judged by misreporting. It is grossly unfair"
- I wrote again at 7.35am when further misreporting was forwarded.
- I received a phone call from an Australia Post manager to inform me the media stories would not be corrected and that they had been given instructions from the top.
- At 9.05am I wrote to the founder of LPOG (Licensed Post Office Group) Angela Cramp and asked her to not take industrial action and to remain open as this was in the best interests of our customers, the communities we serve and the LPO's own financial wellbeing. I copied several Australia Post Executives.
- I wrote to Australia Post and asked would they put the message on the Portal for the LPO's so they could all see she was not supporting closure. Australia Post chose not to.
- At 11.07am Bryan Belling wrote to the Chair and reaffirmed that I had not agreed to stand down, that shareholders cannot ask me to stand down, that I required a lawful and reasonable direction to do so from the Board and there were no reasons to warrant for me to stand down. ***See Appendix 13.***
- The LPO's continued to campaign on my behalf. Click on this to see Sky News.
<https://www.skynews.com.au/details/ 6204899463001>

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

- Robert Gottlieb in *The Australian* wrote “We have just witnessed one of the most successful CEO character assassination campaigns ever attempted in Australia. The target was in one of Australia’s best chief executives ---who happens to be female -- Australia Post’s Christine Holgate

Wednesday 28th October



Scott Burnham, Chair of Australia Post Licensee Consultation Committee

- On Wednesday 28th October, having received nothing back from Australia Post, Bryan Belling wrote to the Chair at 6.15pm stating this was now the 6th day since the I was publicly shamed for an act that was within my authority and approved by the Chair of the time, yet I still had not been informed what I had done wrong. **See Appendix 14.**
- Confidence that any fair process could take place was broken.
- Bryan Belling raised with the Chair several questions to Corporate Governance and asked him to respond to these to enable him to have confidence in the process. These issues received no response.

Thursday 29th October, 2020

- At 1pm Bryan Belling released a statement confirming that I will support an investigation, however, it was now 7 days and we still had not received any proper notification that I was stood down and there were no grounds to do so. **See Appendix 15.**

- A journalist stated Australia Post had confirmed I had verbally agreed to stand aside with the Chair. Australia Post were aware that this skeptical claim did not have legal standing and they required my written approval.
- That day the Chair wrote to Bryan Belling, “Christine agreed to stand aside and I communicated this to the Board”. He reconfirms the terms. All the questions Bryan Belling asked to give comfort in good governance, were ignored. The Chair knew there was no legal basis to stand me aside, but this again was ignored. **See Appendix 16** Interestingly in his evidence at Senate Estimates on the 9th November (Hansard page 73) he says “We had a number of conversations that afternoon and the concluding position was that she would stand aside.

Friday 30th October 2020.

- Scott Morrison on 2GB stated that “she has been instructed to stand aside”. This statement from the Prime Minister clearly confirms again that I was instructed to stand aside. This statement was on air and I believe not protected by parliamentary privilege.
- I wrote an email to the General Counsel and asked him to verify what hour my agreement to stand aside had occurred and to provide any evidence I agreed to stand down/aside. I included that Sue Davies had been with me the whole afternoon on the 22nd October and was witness I had not taken any call from the Chair and verbally agreed to stand aside. I had been in regular contact with Tony Nutt on that afternoon as he had been helping me draft a potential statement, all of which is documented, which clearly outlined my intent to take annual leave.
- I received a reply from Nick Macdonald later that day stating that Australia Post needed to seek legal advice. There was no further follow up or response to my request for evidence.

Saturday 31st October & Sunday 1st November 2020.

- During this weekend I received regular advice from my appointed psychologist and doctors. They and my family were increasingly concerned for my health. I felt a great deal of stress.
- Employees, customers and Licensed Post Offices all campaigned for me to stay strong and remain. Customers increasingly shared their concerns that any investigation now would distract the business at a critical time. Several leaders spoke out in the media in support of me, including Malcolm Turnbull, who was Prime Minister when I was appointed; Julie Bishop, who had been Foreign Minister when I was asked to Chair the Australia ASEAN Council; Ian Silk, CEO Australia Super – who managed one of our Super Funds and Lindsay Fox, who was the founder of our partner LinFox; all of whom knew me well. Numerous other leaders reached out and offered support. Including all three of the CEO’s of the banks with whom I had signed the Bank@Post contract with.
- Unfortunately, it was evident to me that no process was likely to be fair and my role at Australia Post was effectively untenable, particularly as the Board appeared to be protecting unlawful behaviour of the Chair. It was apparent the Chair was actively allowing for me to be discredited. Continuing in the role would only cause further distraction for our employees, risk the service to our customers, as well as risking my own health. I did not want this. I have only ever wanted Australia Post to succeed.

Conclusion:

I never agreed to stand aside or down on the afternoon of October 22nd, there is significant evidence to validate this. Sue Davies is a witness to the point that I did not agree and there is significant evidence in my communication with Tony Nutt.

If there had been a Board meeting at which the Australia Post shared the decision on the Thursday afternoon 22nd October, then why had Tony Nutt not told the Board I did not want to stand aside, even if Lucio would not admit this. I do not believe any Board meeting took place on the 22nd October 2020. The Chair approved the statement to go out announcing I would stand aside without seeking agreement from all the Board members. Either, the Chair misled the Senate and the Board, or Tony Nutt failed to tell the Board. As the Chair was very aware the Executive General Manager, People & Culture Sue Davies was with me all afternoon and she was very aware I did not agree to stand down, why did he not confer with her before making such a significant people decision and announcement?

To this date I have not received any explanation why I was forced to stand down other than the Minister and Prime Minister insisted on it and that in itself, does not have legal standing.

This evidence regarding unlawfully standing me down has been shared multiple times with the Chair, the Board, the General Counsel, the Ministers and Maddock's. All have been made aware that I did not agree to stand down. Interestingly this is not covered in the Maddocks report at all. No one has ever given any evidence to support the Chair's position.

I was not only unlawfully stood down, the Chair misled the Senate in his evidence on this matter.

Chair & Board Approval of the Letter to the Ministers seeking help on 31st March 2020.

Summary:

- At Senate Estimates on November 9th 2020 the Chair was asked whether he or the Board saw the letter, written by me, to the Shareholder Ministers seeking regulatory relief assistance before it was sent on 31st March 2020.
- In giving evidence the Chair responded that he did not recall whether the Board or he saw it or not.
- The Chair was actively involved with the preparation of the letter and signed it off before it was sent to the two Ministers. The Board were also actively involved with preparing the letter. It was discussed at the Board meeting on the 23rd March 2020, the Board meeting on the 30th March 2020 and on a Board call on the 30th March 2020. The Board call was specifically to review this letter. The Chair approved the final version before I sent it.
- The Acting CEO and then CFO and the General Counsel were both actively involved and were aware of both the Chair's and Board's involvement.

Background:

The CEO wrote to the shareholder Ministers on the 31st March 20 seeking assistance and warning of a potentially concerning outlook if a significant lock down was enforced and Australia Post was restricted to operate. The paper included a request to extend delivery times, as due to Qantas significantly reducing their network and the new working processes due to COVID the times could no longer be achieved. We asked for this relief until December 31st 2020, as speaking to other CEO's at the time, this is when we estimated COVID should have ended and we could return to normal duties. We were extremely concerned about the financial outlook for the organization. We attached a range of financial scenarios prepared by the CFO, which highlighted we may need cash and we only had enough to pay the employees and partners for about 6 weeks.

The Government announced a package of Temporary Regulatory Relief on April 21st, 2020 to support Australia Post; this included Alternative Day Delivery for letters in Metro areas, known as ADM. This relief was passed by the Governor and took effect from the 16th May 2020 and will be in effect until 30th June 2021, unless a disallowance motion is passed earlier. A Senate inquiry was held on the 8th July 2020 the inquiry supported the continuation of the relief.

At the Senate Estimates hearing on the 9th November 2020 the Chair stated he could not remember seeing the letter in advance or discussing it with the Board. But did recall (at 7.34pm in the Senate Estimates hearing) that the Board had no discussion about keeping the relief permanent. The Chair stated the importance of the relief was because the parcels business started to surge whilst letters declined.

Findings:

- There were two Australia Post Board meetings on the matter discussing the need to request assistance; the first was on the 23rd March 2020, the second was on the 26th March 2020. There was a Board call on the 30th March specifically to discuss the letter. The Chair personally gave approval on the final draft of the letter to shareholders before it was sent on the day.
- All Board Directors received a copy. There were numerous conversations with the Board about the importance of the Temporary Regulatory Relief, many of which can be evidenced.
- The paper to the Board on the 23rd March 2020 included analysis of possible financial scenarios by the CFO. These assumed a significant fall in letters and Parcels. They did not include a surge in parcels. At the time of requesting relief, evidence from overseas operators suggested that Parcel volumes could fall and there was a risk that in full lock down the Postal organisation would not be allowed to work.
- At the time of sending the letter on the 31st March 2020, Qantas had significantly reduced its air network and Australia Post was already obliged to work differently to ensure compliance to new safety standards. Australia Post carried letters and parcels around the country and world in the belly of Qantas planes. A combination of a significantly reduced air freight network and new operating standards was impacting Australia Post's ability to deliver on time. The outlook was very uncertain.
- The CFO had forecast we could face significant financial challenges including needing a cash injection.

- The letter outlined the many initiatives and actions Australia Post had taken to protect our people, serve the country and safeguard the business. It requested consideration for help until 31st December 2020, to enable Australia Post to have time to adjust to the considerable obstacles facing us.

Conclusion: The Chair may have forgotten his significant involvement in the letter, the scenarios developed by the CFO or why we needed help. However, the CFO and the General Counsel were very aware, as were the Departments, yet no one has ever corrected the Chair's evidence.

E, The current status of Ms Holgate's employment with Australia Post;

As **noted extensively in Section C** even though I have asked numerous times for help to resolve this matter and I have raised it with the Chair, the Board, the Shareholder Ministers and Maddocks, **it remains unresolved**. I have not signed any deed of release.



**We are one of almost 3,000 Licensees of a
Licensed Post Offices Network
in Australia Post
and we support our CEO**

Christine Holgate

100%

**Without her ideas & support we would not be here today
trading as a viable
local privately owned business !**

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

F, The issues surrounding the secret review of the Australia Post by the consulting Group leading to the introduction of changes to Australia Post's service model.

I will be prepared to answer questions on this area if it would be helpful.

G, The future reductions of Australia Post's service model;

This is a matter for Australia Post to respond to.

H, Any other related business:

In this section I will comment on two areas:

- **The Maddocks Review**
- **A summary of the performance of the organisation under my leadership.**

Maddocks Review:

Australia Post – Investigation into the proper use of public resources at Australia Post.

On October 22nd 2020 the Prime Minister and Minister for Communications in Parliament directed I be stood aside while an independent review was initiated into the conduct and governance of the Australia Post Board members and the actions of the management and executive. The Prime Minister stated that if there are issues to be addressed with Board members then they will be addressed by that inquiry.

Late on November 4th 2020 I was informed that Maddocks would be getting in contact with me to organise an interview as part of the investigation they were to conduct for the Government. I was told Maddocks would be doing a search through all my emails over three years.

The interview was set for the November 11th 2020.

My lawyer asked me to prepare for the interview and produce written documents on:

- The background to the Bank@Post agreement, why it was important and the decision making around the watches.
- The process of the Chair standing me down, which I did not agree to do.
- The events when I offered to resign and that I had no agreement with the organization.
- The misleading evidence provided at the recent Senate Estimates (9th November 2020) by the Chair of Australia Post.
- The events leading up to the non-payment of management incentives.
- Past & Inherited Governance challenges, which included Aramex, terminal dues & the UPU, StarTrack Road, SRCC and accurate safety reporting, Australia Post's Performance & Accounts, Executive Remuneration & Costs etc.

I prepared thorough briefing notes to assist Maddocks and these were shared with the firm prior to the interview.

I became aware that although Maddocks did interview some other Australia Post Board members, they did not interview all members of the Executive Team and at the time of my interview, they had not interviewed either the CFO (Acting CEO) or the General Counsel (and yet this was a report into governance). One Executive complained about how she was treated throughout her interview and questioned why some other executives had not been interviewed at all.

Vicki Ballantyne, my previous executive assistant, was interrogated and questioned by Maddocks. She is highly professional and could answer all questions relevant to the time she worked at Australia Post. It became evident to Vicki and I that this was not an investigation into broader governance issues at Australia Post but an interrogation of my leadership.

My interview was over 4.5 hours long. It was exhausting, particularly as this was conducted at a time when my health was significantly compromised.

Australia Post lawyers wanted to attend my interview. Maddocks and my lawyers agreed it was preferable they did not, so I could speak openly about issues, including the actions of the Chair. I understand others also requested that Australia Post's lawyers did not join or had their own lawyers present, including at least one Australia Post Board member.

My lawyer Bryan Belling and Sue Davies, EGM People & Culture attended the interview with me. Sue was my support person.

At the interview we discussed at length many of the issues I had briefed them on. We raised with them serious areas of governance concerns, particularly with the current Chair. We also shared many areas where significant progress had been made to improve governance and reduce costs.

On November 18th, in the afternoon, we were given only a few hours to review the first draft of Maddocks' findings, although we were given only the pages with my name on it to review. These pages could not be emailed to me, printed or forwarded. My lawyer asked if we could have time overnight to finish our response and return it to them.

Our response included:

- Questions why did an investigation into broader governance and the appropriate use of expenditure, not include any commentary on the many difficult areas we had addressed, or where risks had been significantly reduced and costs cut. Or why had any of the governance issues that we had raised with regard to the current Chair, including un-lawfully standing me down, not seeking any closure to my employment contract and misleading the Senate, not been included. Surely these were important matters of poor governance that the Prime Minister should know about.
- We were pleased that the investigation found that there was no deliberate dishonesty, fraud, corruption or intentional misuse of Australia Post funds.
- Please clarify specifically there was no breach of any policy - or expressed in the alternative - no evidence of an intention to breach any policy and recognition that the watches were given in reward and recognition and not as a gratuity. We were pleased it recognised that my authority in relation to this was acknowledged at \$150k, without the need for any other person's approval.
- The Managing Directors delegations under the APC Act, 1989 are very substantial (\$50million-core: \$20 million-non-core) in recognition that the Corporation is intended to operate as a commercial enterprise.
- Is it credible to say (as the report did) there is no evidence John Stanhope the previous Chair supported the rewarding of watches when he wrote the card, both Janelle (previous CFO), Vicki (purchaser) and I confirmed he knew and did. He even recalled calling in at the meeting when the watches were presented. Why would someone write in a card and not know what the gift was?
- As to any possible technical breach of Rule 18 under the PGPA Act, see Rule 5: The question begged is whether what occurred was within the objects *"to use and manage public resources properly."* This is not put lightly. The investigation heard in some detail, evidence identifying the importance to Australia Post and the nation of securing the Bank@Post

outcome - an outcome manifestly in the public interest, generated by the shortage and continuing loss of financial outlets (banking services) in rural and regional Australia. It was a magnificent outcome and certainly deserving of significant recognition and celebration. It generated over \$22m in GST for the Government and funded a critical investment into technology and security which the Community Post Offices needed.

- It was disappointing to see directors, to a person, contend they would not have approved the purchase of watches, the genesis of which was a suggestion of a former Deutsche Post employee who when asked said that what Deutsche Post did to celebrate a success was to buy as reward & recognition a quality watch as a token of appreciation. Deutsche Post is a global example of a profitable state-owned postal corporation. The Rhetorical question is what would the directors have approved? Six of the eight Board Directors approved a pen for the retiring Chairman. Four of the eight approved a \$10.8m payment to the previous executive. Interestingly this is not included. We questioned whether the evidence of all the Board saying they would have not supported is credible, when the Chair and Deputy Chair were not even on the Board at the time? Had they all colluded? And under the previous CEO, it had come to light cars, watches and trips to the Olympics were given, although this was not included, even though many of the same Board Members are still on the Board today
- We objected strongly to the last finding being included. At no point had anyone said I had spent anything wrong on my credit card or was my performance questioned in anyway.
- The comment that the acting CEO, now has his expenses signed off by the Chair as opposed to the CFO, is misleading, as he is also the CFO and the expenses of the Office of the CEO are for both the Chair and the CEO. The practice of the CFO signing off the expenses of the CEO had been in place, for over 10 years and neither Chair had ever questioned this process previously.

Whilst we made no comment on this to Maddocks, we noted that in the draft pages we saw, there was considerable inference that the directors were not aware of their duties and that the Board did not have the diversity of skills that a GBE of its size should, i.e., too many of the Directors experience was primarily from Government experience.

The following day we were informed the investigation was complete. We would not be entitled to see a copy of any final report. All further questions should go to the two shareholder departments.

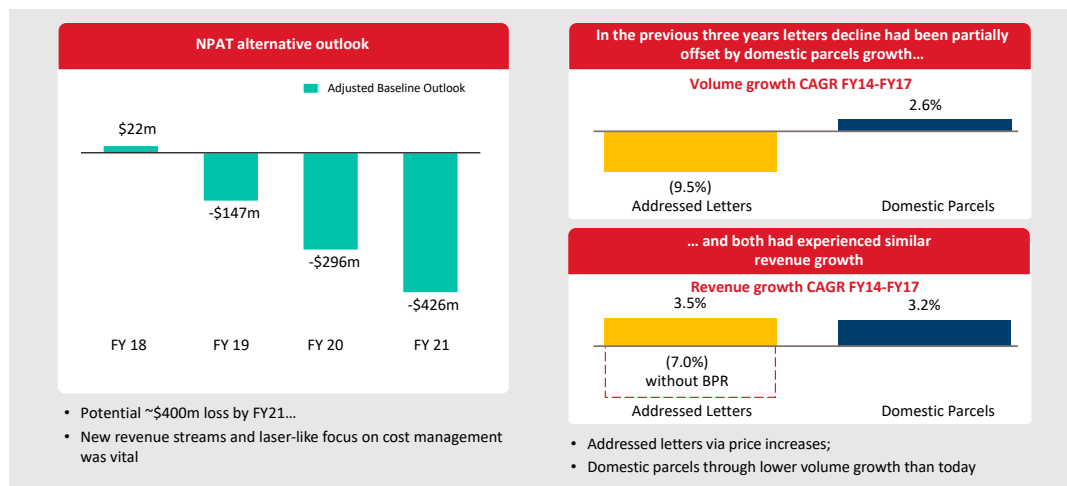
On Thursday 21st January 2021 we were informed the Government would release the report the next day. On Friday 22nd January a version of the report was released. Reading the released report, it was evident the intent of the report had substantially changed from that raised by the Prime Minister in Parliament on the 22nd October. The findings had been modified to question whether the rewards were actually a gift and not a reward and that none of our governance points had been included.

We did not comment on the report, but I believe the report from this investigation is highly misleading; I believe it fails to deliver what the Prime Minister requested, which in itself questions good governance. On the 22nd October, on announcing the investigation, the Prime Minister committed to deal with issues regarding the Board if the investigation raised them. Issues were identified but simply not dealt with.

A Summary of the Performance of the organization under my leadership.

At the Time of My Joining in 2017, PWC Reviewed our Financial Position

In 2017, an external review of Australia Post found our underlying financial outlook was challenged



Leading Australia Post is an honour. It is Australia's oldest organisation and it has been connecting families and business for over 200 years.

I joined Australia Post on 30th October 2017, following a period of significant criticism regarding executive remuneration, complaints of false safety reporting and unclear financial performance. The company had delivered marginal revenue growth for some years, even after they secured a 40% stamp price increase. Profits had been held up by property sales and with the decline in letters accelerating, the outlook was concerning.

On joining I asked PWC to undertake a review of our financial position. The chart above was prepared by them and highlights what they predicted could happen to our profits without major change. PWC predicted by June 2020 Australia Post would lose \$296m. They highlighted that the revenue growth in parcels was very modest and not sufficient to cover the increasing losses in letters, without property sales our profits and revenue growth was negligible. The business still carried 3.3 bn letters contributing \$2.55bn in revenues at this time and Parcels contributed \$3.08bn.

Weeks prior to me joining, on September 28th 2017, the ANAO had produced a report called Australia Post's Efficiency of Delivering Reserved Letter Services. This report, which appeared to have been prepared between previous managers at Australia Post and the Department of Finance, outlines a plan to make significant efficiencies in the organisation, totalling \$339m. These efficiency initiatives though included cutting thousands of jobs and reducing letter services to every second day across the country – this latter initiative was called the National Delivery Model.

Early market research evidenced the important role that Australia Post has in communities, particularly in rural and regional Australia. In over half the communities across the country the Post Office was the last remaining place where communities could access basic financial services. 65% of our employees lived in rural & regional Australia and for every job we employed there, two more jobs were created in the local economy. Almost 85% of people living in Rural & Regional Australia said Australia Post was very important in their local community, in fact the only service they considered more important was Medicare.

The challenges facing us were real and significant. We urgently needed to repurpose the roles of our Community Post Offices and Posties if they were to survive and prosper.

My review of the business suggested that there was a significant opportunity to grow the business and to improve our operational efficiency by leveraging better our own people and resources, coupled with resolving major loss-making areas. If we did this, we could remain profitable, protect the jobs of our people and importantly protect the services supporting our communities. I did not support the theory, that to survive we must shrink and cut.

I chose not to accept the recommendations of the ANAO report, which included cutting jobs and services but to embark on growth.

We announced a simple strategy, called One Australia Post, we would put the customer back at the heart of our business and focus on the community. We wanted to return the Post Offices to profitable growth, develop a focus on business customers and build a successful growing international business, all underpinned by leading in products and uniting our people. We wanted a growth strategy because we all believed this was our best defence to avoiding the losses predicted and protecting our people's jobs.

FY20, announced in late August, we delivered \$7.5bn of revenue. Growing group revenue by 7%, adding \$500m from the previous year and over \$700m excluding letters. Our non-letter and property sale revenue grew to \$5,503m up 33% from 3 years earlier, this reflects revenue delivered from highly competitive markets, predominantly parcels. Letters at 2.26bn in volume fell 14% and letter revenues fell \$197m to \$1,996m; with letter losses totalling \$240m in the year. F20 EBIT rose 45% YOY to \$97m, and after accounting for AASB16 changes, we delivered full year a PBT of \$53m, up 30% YOY.

The year was not without challenges. We are proud that in delivering this we:

- Protected jobs and ensured our workforce were paid equitably and gave all front -line employees, including those in licensed post offices and delivery contractors, a thank you payment;
- Stripped costs from the centre and redirected them to the front line – Corporate Costs down over \$60m.
- Our Post Offices profitably grew, securing a new agreement – the first in 27 years.
- We facilitated 80% of ecommerce in Australia, adding \$4.2bn to the economy, supporting 256,000 businesses to sell online for the first time and support 10million MyPost consumer accounts. Over 1million consumers had never shopped online before.
- We transacted over \$110billion in financial transactions and in over 60% of communities we provided the only access to cash and basic financial services throughout COVID;
- Our new cross border ecommerce business delivered \$225m in revenue – supporting our now \$856m International business;

- We invested in our business with \$316m of capex to build future capacity; opened our first parcel super hub in Brisbane, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere; and built a fleet of 17 chartered planes to fly our letters and parcels across the country
- Improved our cash position delivering a 23.5% growth to \$775m
- We kept our people safe through COVID and we only had one case where it was contracted at work out of our extended 80,000 workforce.
- Most importantly we avoided the \$290m loss that PWC had predicted and all this at a time our country made the greatest loss of our time.

And the positive results continued.

Recently the organisation announced the performance results for the first half. The revenue at \$4.33Billion was a growth of \$571million on the previous year or 15.5%. This is a record half and I believe the highest growth rate in top line revenue in the history of Australia Post. The domestic parcel business added approximately \$800m in new revenues, delivering 45% growth at almost \$2.6billion for the period.

The Profit (PBT) reported at \$166.6million was up 100% from \$83.4million, excluding provisions the Profit was closer to \$200million with a growth closer to 150%. Underlying this is the highest profit performance in 10 years and it has been delivered with 2 billion less letters and now 80% of revenues coming from highly contested markets.

Cash also continued to improve, giving the organization a great opportunity to significantly lower the debt, reduce risk and strengthen the balance sheet further.

All of this has been delivered without needing to sell off properties or cut thousands of jobs, on the contrary jobs have grown. These results were delivered because the broader team of Australia Post pulled together once again and proved that this 200-year-old organization is as important today as it ever was. Under my leadership Australia Post has successfully reinvented itself to be an important enabler of communities, commerce and connecting families.

The future ahead will still have challenges and there is always more work to be done.

However, I am very proud of the team at Australia Post, from our Posties and Delivery Drivers, all our operations teams including customer services, to our Community Post Offices and all our important support and administration teams, these are their performance results and they are exceptional. I thank our people for the honour and opportunity to have been one of them.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix One: Announcement of Bank@Post Agreement with CBA.



Media Release

8 October 2018

Commonwealth Bank of Australia confirms landmark agreement with Australia Post

Australia Post announced today that the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) has signed an agreement to support critical investment in Australia Post's Bank@Post service. This is a landmark agreement in the history of Australia Post and will help ensure all Australians can continue to use Post Offices across the nation to access important financial services.

The five-year commitment includes CBA contributing a new annual Community Representation Fee of \$22 million and revised transaction fees. This partnership enables Australia Post to invest in the Post Office network in order to help provide safe, reliable banking services, ensure our Licensed Post Office partners will be paid appropriately and support the future prosperity of many communities.

Australia Post's Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Christine Holgate said "I am extremely appreciative that the nation's largest bank has taken a lead position in supporting Australia Post. This investment will not only help save a critical service in Post Offices serving the communities of Australia, it saves jobs and supports the financial viability of our local Post Office partners,"

"The agreement ensures customers will be able to access withdrawal, deposit, balance enquiries and passbook services at more than 3500 Post Offices across the country. Approximately 30,000 CBA customers use Bank@Post every day."

There are 1550 communities across Australia, predominantly in rural and regional Australia, who today have no bank branch. The citizens and small businesses of these communities depend on Australia Post to provide access to financial services through the Bank@Post service in their local Post Office.

Without this service these communities face significant economic and social challenges. Recent research by Deloitte Access Economics highlighted the important role Post Offices play in local communities. In fact, with every role Australia Post employs in rural and regional Australia, two more jobs are created in the economy.

Today Australia Post loses money operating the service and does not have the funds to subsidise this service further or make the critical investment needed. Many of Australia Post's local Post Offices are operated by Licensed Post Office partners, who as small businesses, do not have the capital investment needed.

Without support, Australia Post risked either suspending the service or closing some community Post Offices, which would have hurt communities and cost jobs.

“Matt Comyn and the CBA team have shown strong leadership on this issue and a real commitment to ensuring the prosperity of communities that rely on our Post Offices. I would also like to thank both the Treasurer, The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP for his support and acknowledgment that all Australians should have ongoing access to banking services, and Mark Korda from Korda Mentha who has supported our discussions,” Ms Holgate said.

“Importantly, this agreement will allow Australia Post to increase Bank@Post base transaction payments to our hardworking Post Office licensees by approximately 50 per cent, as well as investing in infrastructure including technology and security upgrades, and local marketing. Additionally, we will increase the annual minimum payment to licensees by 25 per cent.

“We continue to have positive and productive discussions with the other three major banks to seek their support for this service. I am very grateful for all the work their teams are doing as we work through these discussions together. Australia Post has proposed that they each commit to a Community Representation Fee of \$22 million and revised transaction fees. If they also agree to a five-year commitment, this could deliver up to \$500 million of additional investment over this period, the largest ever for Australia Post Offices, securing their future and helping protect the prosperity of all communities across Australia.”

For more information on Bank@Post visit www.auspost.com.au/money-insurance/transfer-money/bank-at-post

- ENDS -

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 2: Offer to Resign

2 November 2020

Dear Mr Chairman & Directors

Regrettably, given the recent events, I have come to the view that my continuation as Chief Executive is untenable.

I have done no wrong, but I believe the current situation is not in the best interests of the organisation, our customers, our people or my own health.

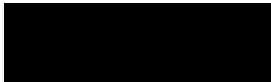
Consequently I am offering to resign as both Chief Executive and as a Director with immediate effect. I do not seek my financial compensation.

The terms of the investigation are now to hand and notwithstanding my resignation I am available to participate in it.

It has been an honour and privilege to serve Australia Post and I am disappointed that I am unable to continue in my role.

This must come to an end today so I would appreciate if you could give me your favourable response. I attach a copy of an external statement which I will be releasing at 2pm, in any event.

Regards



Christine Holgate

CHRISTINE HOLGATE OFFERS RESIGNATION AS CEO OF AUSTRALIA POST

I have offered today the Chairman and Board of Australia Post, with great sadness, my resignation as Chief Executive with immediate effect. I am not seeking any financial compensation.

As Christmas approaches it is critically important that Australia Post is absolutely focussed on supporting our customers and communities. We have prepared significantly for this peak, but we still face significant challenges - keeping our people safe, managing the biggest ecommerce Christmas ever and planning in the face of unpredictable seasonal weather. I firmly believe the 'ship' needs a strong captain at the helm to help navigate through this time. The current issue I am managing is a significant distraction and I do not believe it is good for either Australia Post or my own personal wellbeing. Consequently, I have made the difficult decision to resign, hoping it will allow the organisation to fully focus on serving our customers.

I have had the privilege to lead Australia Post for three years, and I am so proud of what we have achieved together over this time.

Our recent financial results delivered a record revenue of \$7.5bn, up \$500m or 7% and our profits before tax rose 30% to \$53.6m for the year. This was our highest ever revenue growth in a year without acquiring a major asset. Our business transformation accelerated, we kept our people safe, we invested whilst avoiding a loss, unlike many of our international peers. Enabling almost 2000 Posties to deliver parcels in vans created an opportunity for their roles to be sustainable and to serve our country better. Our strong parcel, services and international cross-border ecommerce businesses, all helped compensate for having 400m fewer letters, covered \$242m in letter losses and we still delivered a profit.

Australia Post's first quarter revenues of over \$2bn are up 15%; domestic parcels added \$338m and pleasingly our post office revenues grew 19%. Putting this in perspective, Australia Post delivered more growth in parcel revenues in the first quarter than for the whole of 2018. Since COVID began Australia Post has delivered 300 million parcels, with parcels now representing over 67% of our business, whilst facilitating 82% of Australia's ecommerce, adding a further \$4.2bn in economic contribution to our country. The COVID crisis has changed the retail landscape of Australia forever and I am immensely proud of the significant role Australia Post has played in making this happen.

I have always sought to recognise and thank the efforts of our 80,000 strong extended team, as together they are the real heroes behind our results. Philosophically, I believe if you want to drive positive change, you need to thank and reward positive behaviours.

However, I deeply regret that a decision made two years ago, which was supported by the Chair, to recognise the outstanding work of four employees has caused so much debate and distraction and I appreciate the optics of the gifts involved do not pass the "pub test" for many.

I still believe firmly that the people who achieved the Bank@Post outcome for Australia Post deserved recognition, their work secured a \$220m investment over the following years, which dramatically improved the financial performance of the company, protected a critical community service which more than 50% of the communities in Australia depend on and made our Community Post Offices sustainable for the long term.

I will make myself readily available to participate in the investigation of this matter and any other issues of possible concern.

I have no animosity towards the Government and have enjoyed working with the Prime Minister, the Shareholder Ministers and many other political leaders during my tenure.

I am deeply appreciative of the significant support I have received from our people, our customers, our partners – especially our Community Licensed Post Offices and individuals across the country. I have made this difficult decision to leave to enable Australia Post to be able to fully focus on delivering for our customers.

My sincere apologies if my words or actions have offended others as this would never have been my intention because I have always held Australia Post in the greatest regard.

Australia Post is growing and now has a strong viable future where our Community Post Offices can flourish, our Posties and delivery teams maintain their roles, communities secure ongoing services and one which can support the economic recovery of our country.

Christine Holgate.

Appendix 3: Australia Post Message to Employees 3.31pm November 2nd



This message has been sent to all Australia Post people

November 2, 2020

Dear

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Australia Post, I wish to advise that Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Christine Holgate resigned today.

Her resignation is effective immediately.

Ms Holgate has indicated her willingness to participate in the recently announced Shareholder Departments investigation into aspects of Australia Post expenditure.

The Board and management are providing full cooperation and assistance to this Review.

Christine Holgate has held the role of Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director since October 2017 and while noting the current Review, I would like to acknowledge and recognise the significant contributions she has made during her tenure.

The Acting Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Rodney Boys leads a strong, experienced, executive leadership team.

We thank all of our workforce for their ongoing commitment and all our customers for their support.

During the last three years, Australia Post has reported significant growth as it continued to innovate and transform its operations and structures to best deliver for Australian communities and customers.

This has been one of the toughest years in Australia Post's history and the Board

acknowledges the extraordinary efforts made across the organisation to meet the challenges of COVID-19.

Australia Post has always been there for Australian communities and this year, it delivered more parcels than ever before – 400 million, to more than 12.3 million delivery points across the country. Australia Post invested more than \$20 million in keeping 75,000 of our workforce safe and supported our post office network with 99.6% remaining open and serving the community throughout this time.

The Board is acutely aware of the challenge of the Christmas peak period ahead and Australia Post is working hard to deliver for Christmas 2020.

Lucio Di Bartolomeo
Chair of Australia Post



Australia Post will never send you an email asking for your password, credit card details or account information.

This email was sent by [Australia Post](#), 111 Bourke Street, MELBOURNE VIC 3000. If you have any concerns, or don't think you should have received this email, please email [\[redacted\]](#). Visit ourpost.com.au for further information on our online [security](#).

[Help & Support](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 4 Australia Post Chair letter to CH

On 2/11/20, 4:13 pm, "Lucio Di Bartolomeo" [REDACTED] wrote:

Christine

Please find attached a letter and press release in response your letter of resignation.

With regards

Lucio

Lucio Di Bartolomeo

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPad

The Attachment was:

2 November 2020

Ms Christine Holgate
Group Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director Australia Post

BY EMAIL: [REDACTED]

Dear Christine,

Resignation

Thank you for your letter today advising the Board that you have resigned as both Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Australia Post.

While noting the current review, I would like to acknowledge the significant contributions that you have made during your tenure.

Australia Post accepts your offer that your resignation will take effect immediately (today) and you will not receive a payment in lieu of notice or any other financial compensation from Australia Post. In accordance with your contract of employment, please sign below to vary the contract of employment to give effect to this agreement.

Please see enclosed a public statement that Australia Post has issued regarding your resignation. On behalf of the Board, I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Lucio Di Bartolomeo

Chair

I, Christine Holgate, agree that my resignation will take effect immediately (today) and I will not receive a payment in lieu of notice or any other financial compensation from Australia Post.

.....

Christine Holgate Date:

Statement from Australia Post Chair Lucio Di Bartolomeo

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Australia Post, I wish to advise that Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Christine Holgate resigned today.

Her resignation is effective immediately.

Ms Holgate has indicated her willingness to participate in the recently announced Shareholder Departments investigation into aspects of Australia Post expenditure.

The Board and management are providing full cooperation and assistance to this Review.

Christine Holgate has held the role of Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director since October 2017 and while noting the current Review, I would like to acknowledge and recognise the significant contributions she has made during her tenure.

The Acting Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Rodney Boys leads a strong, experienced, executive leadership team.

We thank all of our workforce for their ongoing commitment and all our customers for their support.

During the last three years, Australia Post has reported significant growth as it continued to innovate and transform its operations and structures to best deliver for Australian communities and customers.

This has been one of the toughest years in Australia Post's history and the Board acknowledges the extraordinary efforts made across the organisation to meet the challenges of COVID-19.

Australia Post has always been there for Australian communities and this year, it delivered more parcels than ever before – 400 million, to more than 12.3 million delivery points across the country. Australia Post invested more than \$20 million in keeping 75,000 of our workforce safe and supported our post office network with 99.6% remaining open and serving the community throughout this time.

The Board is acutely aware of the challenge of the Christmas peak period ahead and Australia Post is working hard to deliver for Christmas 2020.

- Ends -

Appendix 5: Email Trail to Minister Simon Birmingham & Minister Paul Fletcher.

From: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Date: Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at 10:15 am
To: "Fletcher, Paul (MP)" [REDACTED]
Subject: Private & Confidential Note to Minister Birmingham

Dear Minister Fletcher,

Below and attached is a copy of a letter I wrote to Minister Birmingham on Monday. I know Minister Birmingham through my roles supporting the Government in trade and foreign affairs. I spoke to Minister Birmingham this morning. I share this letter, so you are as informed as Minister Birmingham on the matter, from my personal perspective.

Minister Birmingham committed to speak to you this week to see if the three of us could meet and come back to me before the end of the week, whether and when this could be possible. In return I committed to not take any action until I hear back. I am very happy to travel to come and meet with you both at a place convenient to you.

I do appreciate you are both extremely busy, however, I hope you can also appreciate how important to me this matter is to resolve.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks,

Christine

From: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Date: Monday, 23 November 2020 at 3:20 pm
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Private & Confidential Note to Minister Birmingham

Apologies, I duplicated a document and missed another. This is now correct. Christine

Dear Minister Birmingham,

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me, I look forward to hearing about your availability. The last four weeks have been exceptionally difficult for me; I feel they have been very unfair and unjust and I have not been treated respectfully or lawfully. I seek your support in now finding a way forward for myself.

I have great respect for your integrity and as the new Finance Minister and Leader of the Senate, I believe you are the most suitable person to address my concerns to.

I want to begin by reiterating I have only the highest regard for Australia Post and I wish it every success. I have no grievance with the Government, I sincerely respect the role it plays and I continue to be honoured in leading other roles that I have in supporting our country.

I have attached several documents, which I ask to remain confidential, for your reference:

1. A paper which takes you through the background to Bank@Post, and the events on the 22nd October;
2. A summary of the subsequent events with Australia Post after the 22nd October Parliament and being Stood Down;
3. A summary of some of the past and inherited governance concerns at Australia Post.
4. A copy of my concerns with Australia Post's evidence on 9th November at Senate Estimates, which I believe is misleading and inaccurate and needs to be corrected.
5. A copy of my Senate Estimates Speech on the 22nd October.
6. A brief summary of Australia Post's performance over the three years under my leadership
7. A copy of my statement to the media on the 2nd November.

I have not done anything to justify what has happened to me. I purchased 4 watches for 4 managers who had done an outstanding job 2 years ago, securing the largest investment in our history into our Community Post Offices and saving a critical process and subsequently the viability of our Licensed Post Office partners. They were approved by the then Chair as evidenced in his note to each of them. They were within my signing authority. In today's environment giving watches may not pass a "pub test" for some, but this was not now, it was two years ago for a substantial gain for the organization and the communities we serve. Ironically, I could have given them an additional bonus of \$100k each, all within my signing authority and no one would have complained.

I find it puzzling that neither the Minister nor Prime Minister appeared to know these facts when commenting in Parliament on the 22nd October 20; their comments suggested they believed it had happened recently.

When I joined the organization there were considerable governance issues, some of which are outlined in the paper above. I have not gone into detail in these, but I could if required. Whilst I was CEO, I made every effort to reign in wasteful expenditure, cut corporate costs and tighten controls, whilst refocusing the Group on growth and being sustainable. Another irony of this review is that not only did my predecessor give excessive incentives, he gave watches, cars and took at the Executive Team and their partners to the Olympics, none of this has been reported.

Our performance as an organization has been very strong under my leadership, as evidenced in the attached document "A brief summary of Australia Post's performance over the three years of my leadership". In my opening statement to the Senate Estimates on the 22nd October 20 evidences I detail the actions put in place to secure a strong Peak. The Board gave me a 95% rating in my scorecard for F20. At no stage through my 3year tenure, have any performance issues been raised with me.

As a leader I am proud that I was recognised recently as one of the top ten most powerful people in business by the AFR, ranking me the highest female. I am the only woman in Australia to win the CEO of the Year award. I have been awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship from Rotary, I received the Australia Marketing Institute highest honour, the Charles McGrath award last year and I was the inaugural winner of the Chief Executive Women leadership award. My career has and is extremely important to me and I have worked exceptionally hard to deliver for shareholders, customers and employees.

I have tried to remain respectful throughout the investigation process. I have honoured my commitment and I did not speak to journalists during these 4 weeks, nor did I reach out to members of the Government, whom I know well to avoid any risk of interfering with the process.

As you will note from the papers above and attached, I have been subject to continuous misreporting of events in the media and in statements made by the Chair, all of which the organisation has failed and refused to address, even after several important requests asking them to do so. This has resulted in not only my health suffering but significantly damaging my corporate reputation.

Most importantly, I did not agree to stand a side or stand down. All hard evidence proves the contrary. The Chair of Australia Post refuses to give me any evidence to support his view. I urge you to read my accompanying document titled 'The Subsequent events with Australia Post after the 22nd October Parliament and being Stood Down'. This issue has been the cause of great concern to me and I am advised, what the Australia Post Chair did is unlawful.

My reputation was harmed further by several more inaccurate, misleading and damaging comments made by the Chair at Senate Estimates on the 9th November. This is detailed in the paper attached. I feel compelled to correct the evidence and inform the Senate, as not doing so, questions my own integrity. I have not as yet, as I wanted your advice first.

I am deeply disappointed with the actions of the Chair. I believe his actions made my position untenable as he continuously disrespected me.

I have had no voice throughout this investigation period and it is only now that it is finished, do I have an opportunity to address what has happened to me. I ask you to google my name and read what appears and make your own assessment. I strongly believe this is not fair.

On the 2nd November, at approximately 10.45am, after the most harrowing 10 days of my career; feeling absolutely humiliated and deserted by the Australia Post Chair and as such my position had become untenable, I offered my resignation. I did it in the interests of the organisation, the customers, employees and my own health as is evident in my statement.

The Chair was very aware I was under medical supervision and receiving strong drugs. He was also very aware that our Licensed Post Offices were threatening to close their stores, they were mailing \$5 notes to the Prime Minister in support of me and led a campaign to have me reinstated. that Several of our customers reached out to both members of the Government and the organization to get me back to work and thousands of employees reached out to me and complained on what had happened. There was a growing body of people who questioned what happened and why. I wanted the organization to refocus again on our customers and allow me to get stronger.

Accompanying my offer, I respectfully gave the Board a copy of the statement I intended to make after 2pm. My only requirement was to resolve the matter that day and promptly and if this could be achieved and I could be released of all my obligations effective immediately, I offered I would seek no compensation for my notice period. It was not supported as detailed in the attached note.

On Tuesday 10th November, I received another letter, asking me to resolve the matter that day. If I signed this letter from Australia Post it would again hold me to not work for 6 months, be restricted for 12, all without being paid. Further an agreement would commit me to ensuring I would seek no financial compensation from Australia Post in the future, even if they continued to damage my reputation. There was no recognition of the terms of my offer or that these had lapsed.

At this stage I have not signed any deed of release or variation to contract.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021


Simon, as I said in the opening of this note, I have the greatest respect for Australia Post and I have no grievance with the Government. I do though have considerable concerns with how I have been treated, I do not believe it is fair, I feel I have been bullied and humiliated by the Chair, forced to stand down from a role I loved and by evidence was successful in. I have suffered considerable damage to my corporate reputation and health as a consequence.

At the very least, I would like a public apology of the events that have happened to me, acknowledgement that what I did was not breaking any company governance and that I was rewarding 4 managers for an outstanding performance, which saved a critical service in the Community Post Offices, which more than 50% of all communities depend on. I would like my integrity as a Corporate leader reinstated.

I am deeply appreciative of your offer to talk and I apologise in advance that my account of this matter is so comprehensive. However, I hope you will be able to appreciate, this is a very important matter for me to resolve.

I look forward to hearing from you and can be contacted on my mobile below or via this email.

Very best regards,
Christine

Christine Holgate 

Appendix 6 : My Letter to the Chair & Board December 2nd, 2020 regarding misleading the Senate and seeking a resolution to my employment status

From: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Date: Wednesday, 2 December 2020 at 1:06 pm

[REDACTED]

Subject: Private & Confidential: Australia Post Senate Estimates Evidence 9th November 2020 and My Contract of Employment.

To Members of the Australia Post Board,

I am concerned that the evidence given to the Senate Estimates hearing on 9th November 2020 by the Chairman and other members of Australia Post, contained statements that were factually incorrect and misleading, as a result many are damaging to my reputation. I am also concerned that the Chairman may have misled his fellow Board colleagues and others, about the events surrounding my alleged “standing-down” from Australia Post and I want to ensure you are all clear from my perspective of the events in regard to this.

You are most likely aware that I have shared with both Ministers and the Investigation team my concerns in relation to this and other issues and I have provided them with comprehensive supporting information.

In particular, I have shared detailed feedback with regard to the evidence Australia Post gave on the 9th November 2020 at Senate Estimates, with which, I found parts were factually inaccurate, misleading and questioned the evidence and integrity of myself and others. For your reference I have copied a document which highlights some of the areas I found misleading or inaccurate. I have not included in this document a comprehensive log of all the evidence to support my points, but would be willing to provide more information to the Board, if it would help them, e.g. a copy of all the emails and text messages between myself and Tony Nutt on the afternoon of the 22nd October 2020.

You should specifically be aware that I never agreed to stand down from my position, and that there are witnesses to this fact. The Chairman’s comments has misled the Government, the Senate, and the Australian public on this issue, as he continues to assert that I agreed to stand down. There was no legal basis for me to stand down, and I had no intention to leave my post as the CEO. I offered to take annual leave to support an investigation and at no point did I agree to stand down or aside.

I request that you consider your evidence as submitted and that you correct it by close of Monday 7th December, via a written notice to the Chairman of the Senate Committee and issue a public statement which should contain an apology to me for the damage caused to me in consequence.

I am entitled , if not duty bound, to brief the members of the Senate Committee personally on these issues, and my only hesitation in doing so is that I believe doing this will risk significant criticism of Australia Post. Even after all that has happened to me, I only want what is best for the success of the organization and I have no grievance with the Shareholder. I hope you can appreciate though, I cannot allow my integrity to be continuously undermined, nor do I think it is appropriate to allow the Senate and the Government to be misled in this way.

On another matter, at the 9th November 2020 Senate Estimates you were asked whether you had agreed a deed of release with me, and remarked that you were not seeking any undertaking that I will not commence legal proceedings against you. As we are all aware I have not signed any variation to my contract with you, nor a deed of release. Despite this, Australia Post is now actively recruiting for a replacement for my role. I suggest that our lawyers discuss a way forward to resolve this. Mr Bryan Belling is copied and acts on my behalf.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Christine

Christine Holgate

Attachment:

Private & Confidential BBF 1

Australia Post's Evidence at Senate Estimates on Monday 9th November 2020

Throughout the Senate Estimates hearing on the 9th November 2020 Australia Post made several factually incorrect or misleading statements. The evidence reflected significant disparities with the facts as I know them and potentially misled the Senate. These statements include:

Statements that I agreed to stand down – I did not.

1. The Australia Post Chair stated under oath at Senate Estimates on 9th November 2020 that Ms Holgate agreed to stand down – I did not and as of yet, despite several requests, including in writing to the organization and to the Board, from my lawyer, we have not received any evidence or advice when this took place or that I agreed. I did not agree.

2. On the 9th November 2020 at 21.01pm, the Australia Post Chair at Senate Estimates, in response to several questions by Senator Nita Green, confirmed several times I agreed to stand aside/down. He said: "we spoke to her several times and she ultimately agreed to stand aside". "we had a number of conversations with her that afternoon and the concluding position was she would stand aside" He stated the Board met that afternoon, implying before Australia Post made the announcement on the 22nd October, and they agreed I should stand aside. The Australia Post Chair stated a letter was sent to me, as I had elected to stand aside confirming this position, when asked by Senator Green was this legal. This was confirmed by the General Counsel Nick MacDonald.
3. On the 22nd October 2020 I spoke to the Chair briefly twice before the incident in Parliament took place, first approximately 1.55pm and then approximately 2.10pm. On both calls the Australia Post Chair said that Minister Fletcher had called him and said he wanted to do an investigation into why I had given watches and that I would need to stand down whilst the investigation took place. I told the Australia Post Chair that I did not want to stand down, as I had done no wrong, this was two years ago, these watches were approved by the previous chair, they were for securing Bank@Post - a \$220m commitment into the Community Post Offices, without these agreements the service would have closed, standing down would create havoc for the business as we go into our busiest period, but I would absolutely support an investigation and I offered to take annual leave. On the second call, the Australia Post Chair warned me that the Minister and likely Prime Minister, would make a statement in Parliament and he confirmed he had briefed them regarding the background of the watches. I did not speak to the Chair again that afternoon.
4. My husband organized a car to drive me back from Canberra. Sue Davis, the Executive General Manager People & Culture and I travelled back with me to Sydney. She is my witness to the events of that afternoon and can verify did I speak to anyone that afternoon and agree to Stand Down or Aside.
5. My only communication, after the incident in parliament, with the Australia Post Chair that afternoon was written, when at 5.53pm I wrote an email and offered to take two weeks annual leave to enable an investigation to take place.
6. I did speak and communicate regularly with Tony Nutt, an Australia Post Board Director, on the afternoon of the 22nd October 2020, with whom I have considerable email and text evidence. Tony was helping me prepare a statement; all of the drafts confirmed that I had requested annual leave and that I believed I had done no wrong and I would fully support an investigation. The last email with Mr Tony Nutt was at 6.35pm. At no point did I agree to Stand Down with Tony Nutt, nor did he ask me too. I have no understanding of whom the "we" were the Chairman referenced. See Point 2 above.
7. Approximately 7pm 22nd October 2020, Australia Post Chair made a media announcement stating: " "Group CEO & Managing Director Christine Holgate will stand aside during the investigation." The Australia Post Chair did not consult with me on this statement prior to it being sent, nor did any member of the Board inform me about the statement.
8. Approximately 7.15-7.30pm 22nd October 2020, I arrive home, I switch my email and phone off and Sue Davies travels to her own home.
9. 8.22pm 22nd October 2020 the Australia Post Chair writes to all employees, stating that Minister Fletcher had announced a formal investigation and that the CEO would stand aside whilst the investigation would take place. There was no consultation with me regarding this note prior to it being sent out.
10. 8.01am 23rd October 2020, I called the Australia Post Chair. He informed me that he would not be accepting my annual leave request; I would need to stand down and that he would send me a letter later that day to confirm all the details. He would be discussing the matter

- with the Board that morning. I would not be required to attend the Board meeting that day. He did not inform me that he had made a public statement or had written to employees.
11. I started to receive lots of media requests and messages from employees and Post Offices, referencing the Australia Post statements. This is how I became aware of them.
 12. Tony Nutt called me on the morning of 23rd October 2020. I shared my disappointment that the Australia Post Chair had put a statement out to the media and employees confirming I would be stood down; no one had spoken to me on these and I had not agreed to be stood down. Tony expressed his surprise the Chair had done this, as he had not seen them.
 13. The first letter from Australia Post Chair was sent to me on Sunday 25th October 2020, via my husband, in which it implies I agreed to stand aside.
 14. Tony Nutt and I spoke on the morning of Monday, 26th October 2020. I asked why did the letter suggest I had agreed to stand aside, I had not agreed?
 15. Later, on Monday 26th October 2020, I went to seek advice and met with the lawyer Bryan Belling.
 16. Tuesday 27th October 2020, Bryan Belling replied to the Australia Post Chair and said, my client has not agreed to stand down and the Minister wanting an investigation has no legal footing nor does the Australia Post Chair saying I verbally agreed. To stand me aside, the Board must agree and they must inform me why I am being stood down. The Australia Post Policy is, an individual must present a serious risk to the organization, to be stood down, which I believe the Australia Post Board are aware of.
 17. Wednesday 28th October 2020, having not received any reply regarding why I was being stood down, Brian Belling wrote to the Australia Post Chair and Board again, asking why we had not received it, it was now 6 days later from the incident in parliament. He questions whether the Chair will run this process fairly.
 18. Thursday 29th October 2020, we still had not received a reply. Brian Belling makes a statement: 'it is now 7 days and we still have not had proper notification'. We are informed by a journalist that Australia Post had confirmed I verbally agreed to stand down. The Australia Post Chair writes to Bryan Belling stating I agreed to. The letter does not give any details, reason or evidence.
 19. Friday 30th October 2020, I write to the General Counsel, Nick MacDonald, asking when did I agree to stand aside? He replied stating the matter has been referred to their lawyers and they will get back to me. To this date, they have not.
 20. I question, if the Board had met on the afternoon of the 22nd October 2020 and agreed the statement implying I had agreed to stand aside, before it went out, why did Tony Nutt not raise the issue that I was not in agreement, why was he surprised by my comments the following day? Sue Davies was with me all afternoon and can validate at no time did I speak with the Australia Post Chair on the afternoon of the 22nd October after 2.30pm and agree to stand aside. Why did no one contact Sue Davies and seek her view before they made a public statement, as the Australia Post Chair was aware, she was travelling with me and she is the Executive General Manager, People & Culture. I also question whether the Board did meet on the evening of the 22nd October and all agree with the strategy, before the statement went out as implied in Australia Post's evidence at the Senate, as Tony Nutt's comments to myself the next day suggested he had not.
 21. **Summary:** I did not agree to stand aside or down, I have significant evidence, text messages emails and personal witnesses to validate this and I have received no valid explanation from Australia Post on this. I believe the evidence from Australia Post was misleading and inaccurate on this matter.

- 22. The evidence of the Australia Post Chair, on the 9th November 2020, at Senate Estimates, regarding seeing a draft of the BCG report, is not only factually incorrect, it contradicts previous evidence by myself and the General Counsel.**
- 23.** 1st November 2019 in the announcement, by the two shareholder ministers, of the appointment of the new Chair of Australia Post, it stated “To inform the incoming Chair and further inform the Board and Chief Executive Officer, in addition to Australia Post’s existing Corporate Plan 2023, the Australian Government has appointed management consulting firm BCG to conduct a review of Australia Post’s strategy to operate as a sustainable and fit-for-purpose service provider for the longer term. This review will consider broader market conditions such as growth in e-commerce, the regulatory environment, and changes in business and consumer needs. The review is expected to report back to Government in early 2020. This report is referred to as the BCG report or BCG review.
- 24.** The Australia Post Chair was asked several times had he seen a copy of the BCG report. He said no and also said he believed the CEO had also not seen it. Yet, there are numerous occasions when the Australia Post Chair did see a copy of the report and he was very aware I had. These include:
1. 29th January 2020, the Australia Post Chair receives from myself a copy of the interim report and a copy of Australia Post’s feedback.
 2. 31st January 2020, Stacie Hall, a First Assistant Secretary in Finance, sent the Australia Post Chair a draft final report, copying myself.
- 4th February 2020, the Australia Post Chair and I travel to Canberra to meet with BCG at the Department of Finance, with members of the Finance and Communications Departments, to discuss the report.
 - 19th February 2020, the Australia Post Chair received a Board presentation prepared by the Finance Department and BCG, which summarises the report, from myself.
 - 20th February 2020, BCG presented for several hours at a 5hour Australia Post Board meeting on their findings.
 - 21st February 2020 Stacey Hall emails the Chair a Final Draft of the BCG review, copying myself.
 - The General Counsel, Nick MacDonald and I gave evidence on the 8th July at Senate Estimates, that we had seen a final draft of the report.
- 25. Summary:** The Chair was extensively involved with the report. The report was commissioned to inform him. The evidence shared at Senate Estimates on the 9th November 2020 conflicts with actual events and previous evidence by the General Counsel and I.
- 26. Did the Chair or the Board see the letter, written by the CEO, to the Ministers seeking assistance before it was sent on 31st March 20.**
- 27.** Background: I wrote to the Shareholder Ministers on the 31st March 2020 seeking assistance and warning of a potentially concerning outlook if a significant lock down was enforced and Australia Post was restricted to operate. The paper included a request to extend delivery times; as Qantas had significantly reduced their network and we needed to operate differently to meet new safety rules; prescribed delivery times could no longer be achieved. The Government formally responded and they announced a package of Temporary Regulatory Relief, on April 21st 2020; this included Alternative Day Delivery for letters in Metro areas, known as ADM. This relief was passed by the Governor and took effect from the 16th May 2020. The relief will be in effect until 30th June 21, unless a disallowance motion is passed earlier. Labor and the Greens objected to the relief since it was announced, they pushed for a disallowance motion in the Senate, resulting in a Senate Inquiry on the 8th July 2020. The Inquiry supported the continuation of the Temporary Regulatory Relief.

28. Under questioning at the 9th November 2020 Senate Estimates the Australia Post Chair stated he could not remember seeing the letter in advance or discussing it with the Board. But does recall (at 19.34pm) that the Board have had no discussion about keeping the relief permanent. Australia Post had two Board meetings discussing the need to request assistance; the first was on the 23rd March, the second was on the 26th March and the Chair personally gave approval on a final draft of the letter to shareholders, before it was sent. All the Board received a copy. There have been numerous conversations with the Board about the importance of the Temporary Regulatory Relief since it was offered on the 21st April 2020 up to October 22nd 2020, many of which can be evidenced.
29. **Summary**, the Australia Post Chair had seen the letter prior to it being sent, the Board were very involved in considering options how to manage through the crisis and there have been extensive discussions between the Board and Management, regarding the importance of the Temporary Regulatory relief.
30. **The Chair and General Counsel are asked at Senate Estimates who asked for the bonuses to be reinstated and they confirm it was the CEO.**
31. The Chair and General Counsel, Nick MacDonald, confirmed it was the CEO who asked for the bonuses to be reinstated.
32. Although the incentive review process was fraught with issues and the discussions were extensive, I have not specifically covered the matter here. I have prepared a detailed brief if required.
33. Under questioning the Australia Post Chair stated that with regard to the timing of when the proposal to reinstate bonuses was first discussed said "My recollection is that it was first discussed with the board on 24 June."
34. In answering whether it was I who brought the paper, the Australia Post Chair responded "She brought the paper to the board to discuss it with the board. As to the conversations that preceded the bringing of that paper, I don't have that information."
35. Facts regarding the potential reinstatement of incentives include:
 1. 23rd March 2020 all the Board met. There was a planned risk and audit committee that day. The country had started to go into lock down restrictions and the outlook for COVID looked uncertain. The EGM People & Culture, the CFO and I, presented several papers. The papers discussed a plan to take emergency measures to protect the business. A paper prepared by the CFO discussed different scenarios of what Australia Post's cash and profits could look like, depending on the levels of lock down Australia may go into based on feedback from International Postal Organisations. The mid case scenario suggested without action, Australia Post could lose \$477m by year end. Australia Post's trading EBIT at the end of February was \$107m and the organization was considerably ahead of their targets. A number of actions to mitigate the potential risk to the business was put forward. This was part of our strategy; to **Serve** the country, **Support** our employees and **Safeguard** the business. These actions included:
 - i. The Executive Team voluntarily taking a 20% cut to remuneration for 12 weeks;
 - ii. Reducing the size of the Executive Team;
 - iii. The leadership team taking annual leave in April to reduce costs, even though many worked throughout,
 - iv. The Executive Team forgoing their right to any incentive payment;

- v. A salary freeze throughout the organization and an immediate cutting of all non-essential cost;
 - vi. In the request we stated, if for any reason the organization is fortunate enough to make its PBT target and avoid these losses, then the Board will have the discretion to adjust incentive payments between 0-100%.
2. 27th May 2020 Board Meeting, the prospect of reinstating incentives was first discussed. Nick MacDonald and Sue Davies were tasked in getting advice. It should be noted it was evident at this stage the organisation was likely to significantly over deliver on all their main targets and that any potential financial risks had been mitigated.
 3. 2nd June 2020, PWC prepared a paper for the Board on COVID 19 trends and considerations for Australia Post.
 4. 10th June 2020 Risk & Audit Committee, the CFO put forward a paper highlighting the likely PBT for F20 year-end would be \$154m, which compares to the \$41m the previous year, the \$15m target and the possible \$477m loss, i.e. mid-case risk forecast shared with the Board on March 23rd.
 5. A board meeting followed the Risk & Audit Committee on the 10th June 2020 and I was asked to prepare a paper to discuss an update on the Group Scorecard performance and put forward options for the Australia Post Incentive scheme. The CFO was instructed to assume the incentives would be paid in preparing the year end accounts and the F21 Corporate Plan.
 6. 24th June 2020 a paper was tabled by the EGM People & Culture and I, which gave an update on the scorecard and options for the treatment of the incentive plan, which included the option to reduce any payments to 75% of the maximum, to reflect a COVID quarter. We were requested by the Board to seek further legal opinion and do more work.
 7. 30th June 2020 a paper was formally tabled at an Australia Post Board meeting seeking Board endorsement for the incentives to be reinstated. The Board agrees to reinstate the paying of incentives for F20. This paper was from the Australia Post Chair, Lucio the General Counsel, Nick MacDonald. This was not from myself.

36. In preparation for the Senate Estimates hearing on the 22nd October the General Counsel prepared extensive question and answer briefings for the Executive Team. Page 100 refers to the 30th June 2020 Paper presented by the Chair and General Counsel with regard to requesting the reinstatement of rights to incentives.

37. **Summary:** It is misleading to suggest it was I who first requested the incentive plans to be reinstated. It was not I and there are considerable board papers to evidence it, it was under the instruction of the Australia Post Chair.

38. **In the Australia Post Chair's opening statement, he implied choosing the watches as a reward was wrong; this was whilst an investigation was underway.**

39. The Australia Post Chair in his opening statement on the 9th November 2020 said he would not have supported the purchases of the watches and if he had been Chair at the time, he would have vetoed it. As the investigation was not finished, the Chair appeared to be predetermining the decision. This was biased, created more media speculation that something wrong had happened, when the Australia Post Chair on the 9th November knew:
- a. The decision was within my signing authority (up to \$150k for discretionary payments),
 - b. That the evidence from the previous CFO, the recipients, myself and implied by the message from the previous Chair in the cards to the recipients, this had been supported by him.
 - c. It was not in breach of any policy Australia Post had in place at the time.

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- d. It was signed off by the previous CFO, it had been properly accounted for, the Fringe Benefits Tax paid, audited by E&Y for Gary Starr and included in the remuneration report.

40. **Summary:** This was a misleading and an unfair statement to make whilst an investigation was underway.

Appendix 7: AP Response Dated 3rd December

3 December 2020

Bryan Belling Consultant Kingston Reid

GPO Box 1776
Melbourne VIC 3001 Australia

ABN 47 702 595 758

Allens > < Linklaters

By Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Belling

Christine Holgate – Australia Post

I refer to Christine Holgate's email at 1.06pm on 2 December 2020 to the Board of Australia Post with the subject line *'Private & Confidential: Australia Post Senate Estimates Evidence 9th November 2020 and My Contract of Employment'*.

Senate Estimates

The first issue raised by Ms Holgate is a concern about the accuracy of certain evidence given by the Chairman and other representatives of Australia Post during their appearance at the Senate Estimates hearing on 9 November 2020.

Australia Post intends to follow its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for the hearing and communicating any clarifications to the Committee. It will consider the matters raised by Ms Holgate in the course of that review.

Ms Holgate's employment

The second issue raised by Ms Holgate relates to Australia Post recruiting for a new Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director.

As you know, on 2 November 2020, Ms Holgate resigned from her employment and it came to an end that day. On 10 November 2020, Ms Holgate's final pay was transferred to her bank account (less applicable tax).

At about 1pm on 11 November 2020, I attended a Microsoft Teams meeting with Ms Holgate and yourself during which you asked whether Australia Post would release Ms Holgate from any action based on her breaching confidentiality obligations in her upcoming interview with law firm Maddocks. During that meeting you said to me that Ms Holgate's *'employment contract is at an end, as we know'* and she is *'here voluntarily not as an employee'*. For that reason, you asked me whether Ms Holgate was *'at liberty to give full and frank answers to any questions'* from Maddocks and if she gave full and frank answers whether Australia Post would *'release her from any action regarding breach of confidence'*. I took instructions on the matter you raised and then emailed you at 1.27pm and said:

Australia Post is comfortable with Ms Holgate approaching the interview in the way she would if she were still an employee and director of Australia Post. That is, if in response to a question put by Maddocks she will provide information that is confidential to Australia Post she may do so for that

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limited purpose. She should not volunteer any confidential information that is not responsive to a question or relevant to the Terms of Reference.

Further, Ms Holgate must not provide any documents to Maddocks that contain confidential information of Australia Post. If Maddocks requests documents from Ms Holgate you must ask them to direct the query to Allens.

In the circumstances, there is no doubt that Ms Holgate's employment came to an end on 2 November 2020 by reason of her resignation.

Yours sincerely

Simon Dewberry

Partner
Allens

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 8 Australia Post Corrections Letter Chair Budget Estimates 2020/21 Clarifications
21 December 2020



21 December 2020

Senator the Hon David Fawcett
Chair
Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Chair

Budget Estimates 2020-21 Clarifications

The purpose of this letter is to clarify for the Committee a small number of answers provided to the Committee at Budget Estimates hearings on 22 October and 9 November 2020. Clarifications regarding my answers are based on my own knowledge. Other clarifications are based on information provided to me.

22 October 2020 Hearing

In opening remarks made by Australia Post's then Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, it was stated that Australia Post would open 47 extra delivery sites and open up 30 more post offices (in the lead up to Christmas). To clarify, at the time Australia Post anticipated that, by Christmas, it would have opened up to 33 new or repurposed processing facilities, and up to 30 new or expanded capacity sites in our retail network (as parcel pick up locations, or as additional storage locations).

In responding to questions from Senator Kitching relating to the frequency of Board meetings, I stated that the regular schedule is February, March, May, June, August, October and December. To clarify, a Board meeting is typically also scheduled in the month of July, however this is a shorter meeting that considers matters arising from the Nomination and Remuneration Committee meeting held that month, rather than a meeting considering general matters of business more broadly (which is what occurs in the other months referred to – February, March, May, June, August, October and December).

In response to questions from Senator Kitching in relation to which executives worked on the Bank@Post deal, an Australia Post witness referred to Nicole (Sheffield) as having worked on the deal. To clarify, Nicole Sheffield did not work on the Bank@Post deal at the time.

In response to questions from Senator Kitching in relation to the location of the corporate communications function within Australia Post's organisational structure, an Australia Post witness referred to Mr John Cox as the executive director of Transformation and Enablement. To clarify, Mr John Cox is the Executive General Manager of Transformation and Enablement.

Australia Post
111 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000
GPO Box 1777 Melbourne VIC 3000


W: auspost.com.au

In response to questions from Senator Hanson-Young in relation to Thank-you payments made to Australia Post's workforce, an Australia Post witness identified 3,500 licensees and contractors as recipients, and that the value of the payment to licensees was \$500. To clarify, there were 3,600 licensees and contractors as recipients, and the value of the payment to licensees was \$500 (excluding GST) per electronic post-of-sale terminal operated by a licensee.

9 November 2020 Hearing

In responding to questions from Senator Green in relation to the report relating to the Government's review of Australia Post undertaken by BCG in financial year 2019-20, an Australia Post witness advised the Committee that Australia Post had not seen the report arising from that review. To clarify, Australia Post did not see a final report but was provided a draft report during the latter stages of the review.

In responding to questions from Senator Canavan in relation to Post Office licensees, an Australia Post witness referred to a Senate inquiry in 2015 into payments. To clarify, this reference was to the Senate inquiry into the *Performance, important and role of Australia Post in Australian communities and its operations in relation to licensed post offices*, completed in late 2014, which included consideration of payment arrangements with Post Office licensees.

In responding to questions from Senator Green in relation to the temporary regulatory relief, an Australia Post witness stated that our corporate plan had been tabled. To clarify, Australia Post's draft FY21 Corporate Plan had at the time been submitted to Shareholder Ministers for review and feedback but, with feedback not having been received at the time, had not yet been tabled.

In responding to questions from Senator Kitching relating to the regular schedule of Australia Post Board meetings, I stated that there is not a Board meeting in the month of July). To clarify, a Board meeting is typically scheduled in the month of July, however this is a shorter meeting that considers matters arising from the Nomination and Remuneration Committee meeting held that month, rather than a meeting considering general matters of business more broadly (which is what occurs in the other months referred to – February, March, May, June, August, October and December).

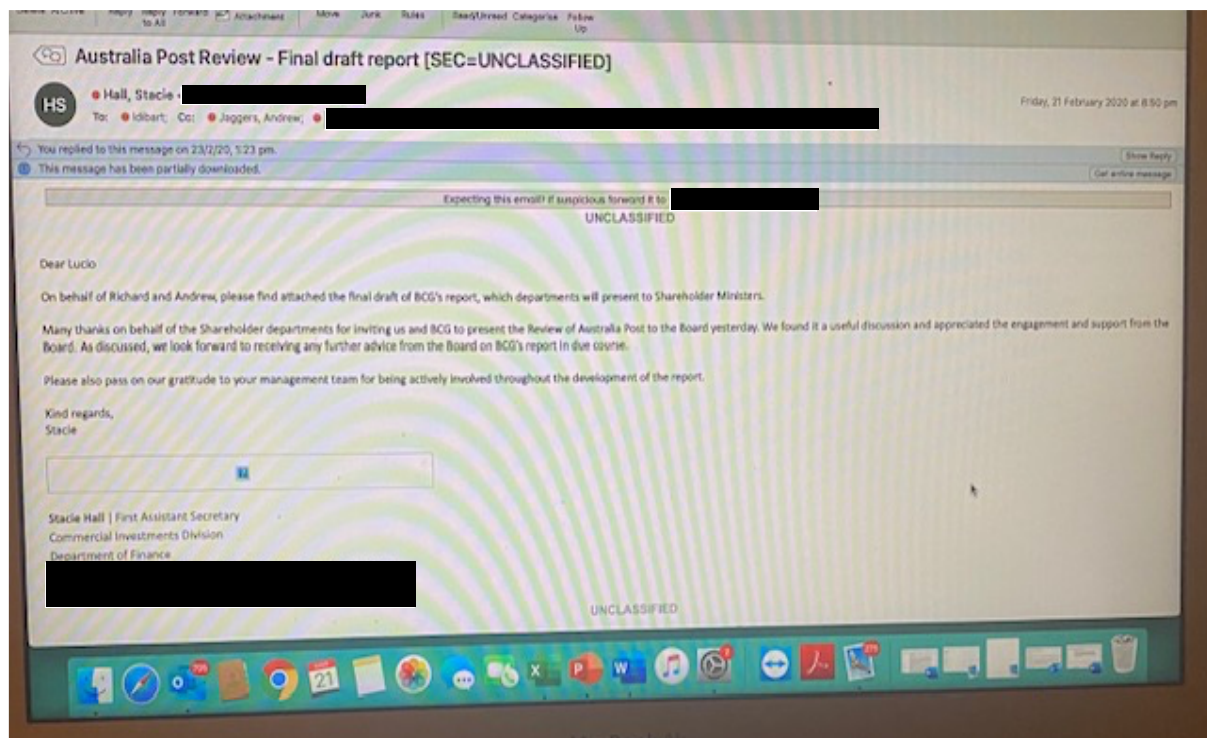
Yours sincerely



Nick Macdonald
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 9: A copy of the cover email from Stacie Hall to the Australia Post Chair attaching a final draft of the BCG Report to go to the Shareholder Ministers.



Appendix 10: Australia Post Media Statements on 22nd and 23rd of October 2020

22 October 2020

Statement from the Australia Post Chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo

The Australia Post Board and management team will fully cooperate with the recently announced investigation to be conducted by shareholder departments.

We remain committed to delivering for our important stakeholders – our people, our Post Office partners, our customers and the community.

Group CEO & Managing Director Christine Holgate will stand aside during the investigation. During this time, Rodney Boys, Chief Financial Officer will be acting in the role.

Australia Post 24/7 National Media Line

Phone +613 9106 6666 | Email media@auspost.com.au

23 October 2020

Statement attributable to Australia Post Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo

Statement attributable to Australia Post Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo

Budget Estimates 2020-21 Hearing Appearance

On 22 October 2020 Australia Post representatives appeared before the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee in relation to Budget Estimates 2020-21.

During that appearance, Australia Post's Group Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director provided answers to questions relating to the purchase of four gifts for four Australia Post employees. Since the appearance, I have become aware of further details of the purchase and wish, as a matter of urgency, to clarify that the purchase was of four items costing \$7,000, \$4,750, \$4,400 and \$3,800 totalling \$19,950 (including GST), and was made in November 2018.

Australia Post will continue to participate transparently in Budget Estimates 2020-21 processes, including to review the proof Hansard transcript of evidence when it is made available and to respond to questions on notice, and will – as reflected in my public statement yesterday – also fully cooperate with the recently announced investigation to be conducted by shareholder departments.

Australia Post 24/7 National Media Line

Phone +613 9106 6666 | Email media@auspost.com.au

23 October 2020

Statement from the Australia Post Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo

Statement from the Australia Post Chair, Lucio Di Bartolomeo

The Australia Post Board is meeting today and on behalf of the Board I advise as follows:

The Board is acutely aware of community and shareholder feedback over the last 24 hours.

The Board noted media commentary regarding the then Board's involvement in the purchase of Cartier watches. The Board was advised at today's meeting that a check of Board papers and minutes from this period show the then Board was not asked to approve or note the purchase of those Cartier watches. The Board was further advised today that these papers and minutes do not record any subsequent reference to the purchase.

Australia Post is one of our country's most trusted brands and its reputation has been built over 210 years. The Board will ensure this legacy is preserved and as part of this the Board and management have this morning recommitted to full co-operation with the Government initiated Inquiry.

Finally, at yesterday's Senate Estimates hearing Christine Holgate and other senior executives outlined the detailed plans that are in place to prepare for this year's Christmas peak. In light of the expected more than 50% growth in parcel delivery it will be the most challenging period in the history of the organisation. This morning the Board tasked Acting CEO and CFO Rodney Boys with ensuring those plans are implemented in full.

We understand that the impacts of COVID on our ability to deliver in a timely manner have tested the patience of our customers, old and new. We thank them for their ongoing support and understanding. We also thank our staff for their ongoing commitment to the organisation.

Australia Post 24/7 National Media Line

Phone +613 9106 6666 | Email media@auspost.com.au

Appendix 11. Australia Post email from the Chair to All Employees (22nd October 2020)



October 22, 2020

Dear ,

I understand today may have been difficult and uncertain for many of you.

As you will have heard, this afternoon our Shareholder Minister Paul Fletcher announced a formal investigation into the gifts given to four senior managers in 2018. This investigation will begin immediately.

Group CEO & Managing Director Christine Holgate will stand aside while this investigation is being conducted. I would like to confirm Rodney Boys, Group Chief Financial Officer will be acting in the role during this time.

I appreciate there will be many questions and would like to assure you that when more information is available, it will be shared as soon as possible.

In the interim, I thank you and ask you to keep focused on the great work we do delivering for Australia.

Stay safe,

Lucio Di Bartolomeo
Chair of Australia Post



Australia Post will never send you an email asking for your password, credit card details or account information.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

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Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 12: Letter received from Australia Post October 24th, 2020



24 October 2020

Christine Holgate
Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
Australia Post
BY EMAIL: [REDACTED]

Dear Christine,

Your agreement to stand aside pending investigation

Following revelations at the Senate Estimates on Thursday regarding the purchase of watches for senior employees involved in the Bank@Post deal, our Shareholder has raised serious concerns in relation to this decision, and has expressed the view that you should stand aside pending an independent investigation in relation to these matters.

As you are aware, Australia Post takes the views expressed by our Shareholder very seriously. Accordingly, the Board has determined that we need to cooperate fully with the Shareholder whilst the investigation is underway. Depending on the outcome, Australia Post can then determine appropriate next steps.

This letter confirms my recent discussions with you that you agreed to stand aside effective Thursday afternoon, pending the outcome of the Shareholder's investigation and any further action taken by Australia Post. As part of this arrangement:

- Your remuneration will continue and you will remain bound by all the terms and conditions of your employment with Australia Post.
- You will not be required to attend the workplace or carry out any of your ordinary work duties except if directed by me.
- You should not have any work-related communications with any directors, officers, employees, contractors, agents or customers of Australia Post, without first consulting with Sue Davies or John Cox. (This of course does not apply to any communications that you might have at a personal level, for ongoing support and connection through this very difficult time.)

Postal Address:
GPO Box 1777
Melbourne VIC 3001
[REDACTED]

Street Address:
111 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
[REDACTED]

During this period, we will implement the following practical arrangements to manage your workload and ensure clarity for the team:

- As has been announced, Rodney Boys will act as Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director. Matters related to or directed to that role will therefore be handled by Rodney.
- You will continue to have access to Australia Post's IT network. We understand that it will be important for you to have access to emails and documents, as may be necessary to respond to enquiries during the investigation. Further, it means that you will be able to receive and respond to personal emails.
- Work-related emails addressed to your work email address will be reviewed and allocated for action to appropriate Australia Post representatives (this will be managed by Vicki Ballantyne, with Rodney Boys' oversight).
- Similar arrangements will apply for incoming correspondence and telephone enquiries. Work-related matters will be reviewed and allocated to appropriate Australia Post representatives and personal matters will be notified to you by email.
- Sue Davies will continue to be your primary point of contact on all employment related matters and to ensure that you are properly supported by Australia Post, during this extraordinarily difficult time. (Of course, this is in addition to support available from your team.)
- John Cox has been nominated as a primary point of contact for any information requests or other queries that you may have (for example, requests for information to assist you in responding to enquiries during the investigation).

You will be required to cooperate with Australia Post and the Shareholder in relation to its investigation, including attending interviews. You will also be required to maintain confidentiality in relation to the investigation process and are directed not to contact or discuss this matter with anyone inside or outside of Australia Post. This includes any witnesses involved in the investigation. It is understood you may wish to discuss the matter with a professional adviser or members of your immediate family, but if you do so you must also do everything possible to ensure that they respect the confidentiality of the investigation process.

Whilst we have not been provided with any details from the Shareholder in relation to its investigation, we will contact you in due course to advise next steps.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Sue with any queries. Yours sincerely,

Lucio Di Bartolomeo

Chair

Appendix 13: My response to Australia Post on October 27th, 2020.



27 October 2020

Privileged and Confidential

By email: [REDACTED]

Mr. Lucio Di Bartolomeo Chair
Australia Post
111 Bourke Street MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Di Bartolomeo

Christine Holgate

We act for Christine Holgate.
We have your letter dated 24 October 2020.

Our client has expressly not agreed to stand aside as your letter suggests and has been reported widely in the media.

She did suggest she take annual leave but that was not agreed by you. She has also stated she will fully support any fair investigation. Our instructions are that you committed to give her a letter requesting her to stand down and why you wanted her to, as the employee policy indicates.

Any standdown directed by shareholders is of no force and effect as shareholders do not have standing to give such a direction. Any attempt to give effect to such a direction will be improper. Further, to the extent the Shareholders might be influenced by the Prime Ministers outrage as expressed in Parliament, there has been a conflation by the Prime Minister between the recognition of excellent work done and celebrated in 2018 with an asserted underserved reward proffered during the global pandemic.

In the event Ms Holgate is to stand aside she requires a lawful and reasonable direction from the Board to do so. In that respect the Board should consider at least the following:

1. The shareholders, as your letter notes have not yet favoured you with "any details from the Shareholder (sic) in relation to its investigation;
2. The allegations (which are in the public domain) relate to the purchase of 4 watches.
3. There is no basis on evidence known to you and the Board of misconduct, namely:
 - (a) The then Chairman authorised a bespoke reward be organised for the 4 subject executives;
 - (b) The gifting of these watches was not secreted;
 - (c) No benefit pecuniary or otherwise was received by the CEO;
 - (d) The acquisition of these gifts, by the corporation, was properly documented and signed off by the CFO; and

(e) FBT was paid on these gifts.

4. Absent misconduct there is no warrant to stand down the CEO.
5. Indeed, on known facts concerning these gifts there is no warrant to investigate anything;
6. Whether there is any warrant to stand down the CEO by any expansion of the investigation by reference to the CEO's corporate credit card expenditure, the detail of which for since July 2019 is presently available for review and interrogation.
7. Whether there is any warrant to stand down the CEO by any expansion of the investigation by reference to expenditure incurred by the Office of the CEO otherwise because those records are available and do not evidence any wrongdoing.

Ms Holgate is entitled to be especially troubled by the matter we have set out in paragraph 1. Presently she is pilloried in the press by reference to allegations which are not capable of present articulation and the subject of the wrongful conflation we have referred to. To date there has been no defence by or on behalf of the Board either of Ms Holgate or the process of investigation which is squarely within the Board's domain as the governing body of the corporation. This is especially egregious as certain matters of fact as are reported against Ms Holgate are wrong and known by the corporation to be wrong. Actionable injurious falsehoods are being published daily and Ms Holgate is directed by you not to respond to those: in these circumstances the want of protection by the Board is aggravating the damage to Ms Holgate's reputation.

The investigation clearly identifies issues concerning corporate governance beyond the CEO. We are instructed you are aware several executives have shared with you their deep concerns regarding proper governance. A singular example being executive bonuses.

Alternatives are available for Board consideration. For example that no investigation of the CEO is warranted at all on facts known to the Board. Alternatively, there is no evidence justifying the CEO being stood down and any investigation can be properly done under protocols which allow her to continue in her role.

Once some level of propriety is brought into being Ms Holgate will cooperate with a properly constituted investigation. Propriety requires the Shareholders are to be removed entirely from any part in an investigation because any investigation is properly a matter for the governing body of Australia Post, namely the Board.

Ms Holgate, assuming the decision is to investigate, welcomes an independent investigation on allegations of sufficient particularity to allow her to fully respond. It is noted that certain terms of reference are reported in the Sydney Morning Herald this morning. How is it that in a confidential investigation confidential matters are reported in public before Ms Holgate is informed of them?

Ms Holgate is circulating copies of this letter to each director. Other than for the taking of legal advice, this letter is not for publication without Ms Holgate's written permission.

Ms Holgate reserves all of her rights.
Mr Belling has the carriage of this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Bryan Belling Consultant

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021



Appendix 14: My response to Australia Post on October 27th, 2020.



28 October 2020

Privileged and Confidential

By email: [REDACTED]

Mr. Lucio Di Bartolomeo Chair
Australia Post
111 Bourke Street MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Di Bartolomeo

We act for Christine Holgate as you are aware.

Consultant: Bryan Belling [REDACTED]

Today is the 6th day since Ms Holgate has been publicly shamed principally for an act committed in 2018, that was within policy, approved by the Chair at the time, signed off by the CFO, did not benefit her in anyway and was openly celebrated.

Ms Holgate was recognising 4 individuals who had secured \$220m in contract value over the coming years with a new Bank@Post fee structure. This contract will generate \$22m in GST revenue for the Government. It has secured the future of this critical service in community Post Offices, which 50% of all communities in Australia solely depend on for access to basic financial services and has enabled the license Post office network to remain viable. One can have no doubt therefore of the reasons thousands of Licensed Post Office owners and Post's major customers are actively supporting the GCEO through this time.

Ms Holgate still has not been informed by you what she is accused of having done wrong. Our client is extremely disappointed by a lack of support, response and follow up to her. Moreover, any process undertaken at the behest of the shareholder ministers in the events as have happened lead to our client holding grave concerns that she can trust that any response or process can be fair.

Ms Holgate has been assailed publicly concerning gifts and amongst other things incentive payments contractually promised. There are several questions to which our client is entitled to an answer, especially if confidence in the investigation is to be promoted. Answers to these questions will assist my client in her preparation for the investigation in respect of which, again, she has yet to receive formal notice. Consequently, we look forward to your response.

- [REDACTED]
1. On 5 August when you met with the 2 shareholder ministers did you agree if 2600 managers were paid their incentives, the Executive Team would not be paid any incentive payment?

2. If the answer to 1 is no (or qualified) why did the Communications Minister say to the GCEO on 7 September: "I am surprised the Board has taken so long because the Chairman committed that if the broader 2,600 managers would be paid their incentives, the Executive Team would not"?
3. If the answer to 1 is yes: Why did the Chair continue to agitate deferral of any decision as being a solution, including at the Board meeting that night, the next day (06/08/20) with the Executive Team and in the email on the 1 September to the Board?
4. On the 1 September 2020 you wrote to the Board and stated:

"I received a call from Minister Fletcher a little while ago advising that he was about to make a press statement saying that he believed the Executive Team should forgo their bonus payment for the 19/20 Financial year in light of Christine's comment back in March to do so. He felt the press and political pressure including Pauline Hanson's comments this morning made it difficult to do otherwise."

Did you receive a call from the Minister or was it his Chief of Staff?

5. On the 3rd September you wrote to the Executive Team individually and stated the reason why the incentives would not be paid as;

"From my perspective, I note the extraordinary circumstances of both the nation and Australia Post in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a very strong response from the public and our shareholder regarding incentive payments for the Executive Team. Like any Board, our remuneration decisions need to take account of stakeholder expectations – and that imperative is amplified by our status as a Government Business Enterprise. We have all seen the recent escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the developing situation across Australia – and the increased uncertainty about the impact of these events on Australia Post. Further, the debate about the need for and nature of regulatory relief – and implementation of the Alternate Delivery Model – makes it clear that Australia Post faces considerable challenges to build stakeholder support and remain sustainable into the future."

- (a) Why were the Executive Team incentives held back?
- (b) Was it because the Minister's Office instructed you to?
- (c) Was it because the Minister was concerned about losing Pauline Hanson's support in the Senate for Temporary Regulatory Relief? Or:
- (d) Was it because of COVID19?
- (e) Why then, in your opinion, did the Government support the NBN bonuses, saying any payments were a Board matter?
- (f) Why do the reasons in the Remuneration Report differ to the reasons implied in your note to the Board on 1st September and given to the Executive Team in writing?

Answers to these questions will assist my client in her preparation for the investigation in respect of which she has yet to receive formal notice. Consequently, we look forward to your response.

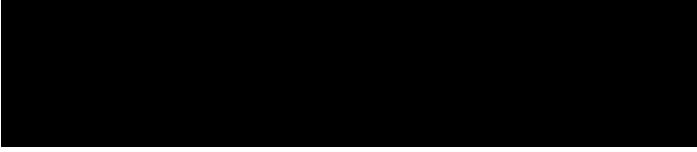
Other than to the Australia Post Board and for the purposes of taking legal advice this letter is not for publication.

Mr Belling has the carriage of the matter.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Yours faithfully,

Bryan Belling Consultant



Kingston Reid 3

**Appendix 15: Public Statement Confirming I will support the Investigation
Thursday 29th October 2020.**

I act for Christine Holgate.

Ms Holgate will fully support a fair investigation.

However, it is now exactly seven days since Ms Holgate was the subject of a humiliating answer during Question Time. In that time Ms Holgate has not had any proper notification that she has been stood down from her role, nor has she been informed as to why she should be stood down, nor has she had any communication regarding what the investigation into Australia Post from either the Board or the Government.

It is incumbent on the Board to formally notify Ms Holgate that she has been stood down, and this notification must stipulate the grounds for this action. This is the case under general employment law, as well as the specifics of Australia Post's own employment regulations. The Board has failed to do so. Legally, in my opinion there are no grounds for Ms Holgate to be stood down, and "optics" is not a legally-valid defence.

I have taken the step of releasing this statement because within the past week I have written to the Board and again separately to the Chairman of Australia Post and have not received a response in terms.

I have no option but to publish this statement in the interests of my client

Bryan Belling
Kingston Reid

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Appendix 16: Chair writing to Bryan Belling Thursday 29th of October 2020. The Chair knew there was no legal basis to stand me aside.



29 October 2020

Bryan Belling
Consultant
Kingston Reid
BY EMAIL: [REDACTED]

Dear Bryan,

Christine Holgate

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October 2020 regarding Christine Holgate's employment with Australia Post.

Christine agreed to stand aside and I communicated this to the Board.

I confirm that Australia Post will continue to treat Christine as follows during the independent investigation:

- Her remuneration will continue and she will remain bound by all the terms and conditions of her employment with Australia Post.
- She will not be required to attend the workplace or carry out any of her ordinary work duties except if directed by me.
- She should not have any work-related communications with any directors, officers, employees, contractors, agents or customers of Australia Post, without first consulting with Sue Davies or John Cox (except any communications that she might have at a personal level, for ongoing support and connection through this very difficult time).
- She will continue to have access to Australia Post's IT network.
- Sue Davies will continue to be Christine's primary point of contact on all employment related matters and to ensure that she is properly supported by Australia Post.
- John Cox has been nominated as a primary point of contact for any information related to the independent investigation or other queries that Christine may have (for example, requests for information to assist Christine in responding to enquiries during the investigation).

Postal Address:
GPO Box 1777
Melbourne VIC 3001
[REDACTED]

Street Address:
111 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
[REDACTED]



29 October 2020

Bryan Belling
Consultant
Kingston Reid
BY EMAIL: [REDACTED]

Dear Bryan,

Christine Holgate

Thank you for your letter dated 27 October 2020 regarding Christine Holgate's employment with Australia Post.

Christine agreed to stand aside and I communicated this to the Board.

I confirm that Australia Post will continue to treat Christine as follows during the independent investigation:

- Her remuneration will continue and she will remain bound by all the terms and conditions of her employment with Australia Post.
- She will not be required to attend the workplace or carry out any of her ordinary work duties except if directed by me.
- She should not have any work-related communications with any directors, officers, employees, contractors, agents or customers of Australia Post, without first consulting with Sue Davies or John Cox (except any communications that she might have at a personal level, for ongoing support and connection through this very difficult time).
- She will continue to have access to Australia Post's IT network.
- Sue Davies will continue to be Christine's primary point of contact on all employment related matters and to ensure that she is properly supported by Australia Post.
- John Cox has been nominated as a primary point of contact for any information related to the independent investigation or other queries that Christine may have (for example, requests for information to assist Christine in responding to enquiries during the investigation).

Postal Address:
GPO Box 1777
Melbourne VIC 3001
[REDACTED]

Street Address:
111 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
[REDACTED]

- She will be required to cooperate with Australia Post and the Shareholder in relation to the independent investigation, including attending interviews.
- She will also be required to maintain confidentiality in relation to the investigation process and she is directed not to contact or discuss this matter with anyone inside or outside of Australia Post. This includes any witnesses involved in the investigation.

Please see **attached** a copy of the terms of reference for the independent investigation. John Cox will contact Christine when we receive details about the process that will be followed for the investigation and what is required of Christine.

Yours sincerely,

Lucio Di Bartolomeo
Chair

Terms of Reference

Australia Post provides critical services to all Australians.

Australia Post is established under the *Australian Postal Corporation Act 1989* and is a wholly owned Corporate Commonwealth Entity and Commonwealth Government Business Enterprise under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

The Minister for Finance and the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts are the Shareholder Ministers of Australia Post.

The Government expects all government entities, including Government Business Enterprises, to act ethically and adhere to high standards regarding the expenditure of money, as the public also rightly expects.

Noting the governance and legal obligations that apply to Australia Post, and the expectations from the Australian Government and the public about the behaviour of public institutions, the Department of Finance and Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, supported by an external law firm, will undertake an investigation into Australia Post's governance arrangements and corporate culture concerning the proper use and management of public resources, in relation to gifts, rewards and expenses, including personal expenses of executives. The investigation will determine whether Australia Post has expended money ethically and acted in a manner expected of a Government Business Enterprise.

Specifically the investigation will determine:

- The facts around an incident involving the provision of wristwatches to Australia Post staff in late 2018;
- The role of the then Australia Post Chair and Board, and the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer in the incident;
- Whether there are other instances in Australia Post inconsistent with appropriate behaviour for a GBE that require further investigation;
- Whether this incident or other instances (including the actions of those involved) are consistent with:
 - o the obligations of Directors and Chief Executives of Government Business Enterprises; and
 - o the efficient, effective, economical and ethical expenditure of money and use of public resources.
- The extent to which Australia Post's governance arrangements and management culture, in particular in relation to gifts, rewards and expenses, including personal expenses of executives:
 - o supports the efficient, effective, economical and ethical management of resources;
 - o meets the expectations of the public around the leadership and governance of Australia Post as a public institution; and
 - o require further investigation or review.

A report is to be provided to Government within four weeks of the investigation commencement.

Voices.



Since October 22nd many individuals have and continue to support me. Many worked with me and so many more that I have never met. Yet they reached out and shared their views. The above is a poster that some of our licensees made. Below is a fraction of the messages I received, but they give insight into the diversity of views held by our people, our customers and the broader community. Many of these messages were sent to my Australia Post email; the same Email address that Maddocks went through and they would have seen, yet there is no mention of them in the Maddocks report or of any of the concerns these people raise.

These voices gave me back my drive and determination to stand up again. I will be forever indebted to them.

From: Greg Rosier [REDACTED]
Date: Sunday, 21 March 2021 at 10:43 am
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Support

Hi,
So glad to hear from you, 100% you can utilise whatever I have tendered to you, twitter etc etc; As you realise you have always had my support both personally and professionally.

Without what YOU undertook to achieve to assist and rectify Posts payments to LPos, many including our LPO would have either closed or simply given up.

As a very vocal part of the Twitter army branch of LPOG I have hammered politicians day in day out. Madewro and I have bounced off each other.

The 1st matter I and many wish for, is the removal of DioBartolomeo, listening to him at Estimates, honestly I wanted to scream; My personal opinion, just a piece of work destined for the gutter;

Its not only my personal opinion but many LPos, and Australians that believe you MUST be reinstated, and an apology issued unreservedly.

Christine, to use a real aussie saying, what you did for POST and LPos is better than vegemite on toast;

I lodged a very detailed Submission to the Inquiry. I have received correspondence and calls from the Senate staff regards my comments.
I have spoken with Pauline Hanson, the Citizens Group Reps left messages at Ministers offices.

I think Many in Canberra are aware of my name, of course along with the extreme efforts of others particularly Angela, Andrew etc.

I really cant wait for the "party" we can all enjoy ,C1 back at the desk, DiBartolomeo gone.

THIS fight for your return is NOT over, we wish for and need you back at the desk doing what you do best, CEO of Australia POST.

Thanks and best wishes

Greg Rosier

This was a message to me on Linked in:

A Tall Poppy

I know you don't know me Christine, but I'm one of the thousands of ordinary Australians who have watched on in disbelief at the events that have unfolded around you and Australia post over the past 10 or so days. I wanted you to know that the politics of deflecting attention away from a corrupt, nepotistic, incompetent and truly disgraceful federal Government has not been lost on us. We are disappointed and demoralized by the bipartisan support for a witch hunt against one of our tallest poppies and the clear inequities in your gendered treatment, while a culpable and cowardly Board slinks without scrutiny into the background. It is a topic of conversation in

the streets, not just in the corridors of political power, the media and commercial boardrooms. I know you have had much support and advocacy from across the spectrum of Australia, not in the least from your staff and business partners. I despair that there was not more, it was certainly building in the community, where every second conversation seems to bear your name. I grieve that it has resulted in the loss of such extraordinary talent to Australia Post, but I hope not the loss of commitment and passion for a country that probably does not deserve you. You have inspired many whom you do not know, and may never meet, and have set a benchmark for courageous, compassionate competence; leadership with integrity; and a departure with dignity which is resonating in the back streets and inspiring our youth, including my children. We embrace you with our support, and our gratitude.

By all means Christine please use my email, but it would be a good idea to blank my name out please! Since your departure it has even become more apparent that the treatment of women in general, whether it be in the home, in public, in the workplace, or even within Parliament House has to be addressed. The treatment of Brittany Higgins following her sexual assault has been embarrassing.... almost swept under the carpet! Nice to hear from you and I really would love to see you back at the helm one day, although you might need to restructure that board of ours starting with the Chairman.

Again, Yours Forever Thankfully,

Paul

Good morning Christine!

Absolutely!! Please use what you need in the communication I have sent to you, would be delighted if the feedback was not only heard but felt.

I can feel this will be apart of something so much bigger for you, nothing is sent to you that is not made for you.

You are protected, guided and supported, you will shine through the enquire!

Sending you all the energy and strength
You are amazing don't forget

Warmest regards
Steph

Hi Christine, good to hear from you. Shocking weather, no good for your walking you'll have to double your steps when it clears up to catch up ha ha.

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Happy to share the feedback and what I said about you really hope it can help towards the inquiry.

Regarding my name If using my name offers you more strength towards the case from my feedback then use it as I really want to be genuine to you and get this through. Otherwise it may be best to blank my name as I am employed at [REDACTED] and i am also in the union and people in these big places tend to talk a lot.

Stay positive Christine and do let me know how things are travelling.

Best of luck

[REDACTED]

Hi Christine ,

Wow that came as a real surprise but a nice one really made my day. Can't believe it really that you emailed me but feel very honoured. Thanks Chris.

I am so happy that the investigation has come to a close I had my own feeling in the matter and after chatting to you at swalf I just felt you was a honest women. You was open to me and I appreciated this. I would like to add that even on my daily run pretty much most of the customers I speak to and deliver to always feel you was hard done by. The organisation feels at a loss with no real leader there at the moment. Many of the customers felt you was an awesome CEO. Come back Christine ! I miss you. Guttted you resigned actually but can also understand it. Your talented and no dought you will fall into something again which suits you. Hope your husband and your family is ok. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It's sucks! Been an awful year and can't see it improving for sometime. What's your thoughts? Have my sisters there [REDACTED] which helps they are not far away. I hoped to get back this year but exemptions and I couldn't leave [REDACTED] at home alone for so long so I felt wait a while till it gets better. Hopefully things will improve. Thanks again for the email, still kicking myself for not taking you up on that offer when you offered to walk my beat with me. Would of been special.

Take care and stay safe give my regards to sue Davies hope she is ticking over nicely.

All the best,

Kevin.

From: Peter Wheeler [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 31 December 2020 at 4:48 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Thank you and very best wishes for 2021

Christine,

Thanks for your new years wishes.

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You were treated very poorly by the Prime Minister but you have displayed great discipline and dignity at all times. We are not surprised by this and our respect for you has only grown over the past couple of months.

I'm sure you are aware that many of us who are members of LPOG want you to return to the CEO role. We would be wrapped if you could resume work with Australia Post. That said we also only want what is best for you but please come back.

Once again thanks for your new years wishes. We hope 2021 is a great year for you and your family.

Kind regards,
Nicky and [REDACTED]

From:

Date: Sunday, 21 March 2021 at 9:46 am

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Request for Support

Good morning Christine

I feel as strongly today as I did when I wrote my email of support.

As a mother of a young daughter, it's important for her to understand when you provide support you give it unreservedly.

Yes, please add my letter of support to what I am sure is a vast collection.

I wish you all the very best this week, and first and foremost you do receive the right apology.

Kindly,

Eliza

Christine,

"We all SINCERELY miss you & as much as Angela Cramp is doing everything she can on her side the rest of us are left to wonder what the future brings?

I know one things for sure... WE'D all love to have you Back!!! So if there's any still glimmer of hope , hang in there !

Ps - between you & I , I bet Somo is feeling like a real 'dick head ' now (excuse the French).

Miss you ,

Take care, keep smiling!

Scott B "

Christine,

Please feel free to share my emails (in full, attributed to me) in any way you like.

If there are any other ways I could help please don't hesitate to ask. There are many of us doing our best to manage our expectations, while at the same time lobbying as hard as we can to get you back in your role. And if we can make some changes at the Board level then that would be a bonus too.

Please know that there are many people who want nothing but the best outcome for you, whatever that may be. Thank you for all you have done previously. I hope you have the opportunity to continue your plans for AusPost.

Kind regards

Scott.

From: Scott [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 31 December 2020 at 10:25 am
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Thank you and very best wishes for 2021

Thank you Christine.

All the very best to you and your family in 2021.

It has been my absolute pleasure to lobby for you. The positive changes at AusPost I've experienced since you became CEO have made a material difference to me, my family and my team here at [REDACTED] LPO.

While I am hoping that circumstances allow to you continue as our CEO (and maybe even with a greater mandate to improve AusPost), I understand that this outcome might not be the best outcome for you. If that turns out to be the case, I wish you further success in whatever you choose to do.

If your travels ever bring you past [REDACTED] and you're free for a coffee or a glass of [REDACTED] Wine I would love the chance to thank you in person.

Here's to a great 2021.

Kind regards

Scott

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Licensee, Gulgong Post Office

From: stephanie

Date: Thursday, 31 December 2020 at 8:54 pm

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Thank you and very best wishes for 2021

Dearest Christine

So pleased to hear from you and that you have come through such a tough time with an abundance of dignity, grace and courage.

I believe that if your not doing what you are truely here to do as a human who has a gift to share the. life has a funny way of pushing you on that course. So I wholeheartedly believe that even greater things await you, you will see!!

I was personally so sad with your departure from the organisation you reflect everything that we need and your energy had such a following. I myself saw you as a mentor and someone to look up to as a leader, still do of course!

You inspired me to have the courage take on the task of introducing a more feminine way of leadership that our people are craving, not limited to gender but from a place of care support and recognition. In WA we have a huge imbalance in our delivery leaders leading from a traditional masculine energy and people are craving to be nurtured and recognised just for being the good people they are.

We have gained a bit of a following since I have been mentoring my senior leader complimenting his process driven style of leading and have found combined it makes a powerful combination in helping our posties to go home happier and feel like they are doing wonderful work and feeling more like a family.

The leader who I have been working with is overjoyed with the response and feedback he's had (he's been with the organisation 33years)

I personally feel that it's the human connection that everyone can feel and it's making people happier!

Of course this is only at one delivery centre where I am still PDO but hope to share this way of leading through out our immediate network, if we can get a manager who has been here 33 years and is a self proclaimed 'doer' and knows everything ;) to start enjoying the people he works with, protect them, bring everyone together as a family, make the work they are doing feel meaningful and even share a few Christmas hugs with every one which is unheard of, then I think we are on to a winner!

So if you have any tips on how I get the senior leaders to help support this movement from one powerhouse feminine leader to a someone who wants to make a difference please I will be all ears!!

And not surprisingly the managers who love a more nurturing approach where your biggest fans :)

Thank you so much

Reach for the stars there's so much more you have to give

Happiest of New Years

Warmest regards

Steph

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[REDACTED] delivery centre

From: Satish [REDACTED]

Date: Sunday, 21 March 2021 at 10:00 am

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Request for Support

Hi Christine

Please do share our emails to you including this one as we still believe that a bonus is a reward for a job well done, whether it be with a watch, cash or kind. The entire LPO network benefitted from your leadership and we feel a huge void without you at the reins.

Good luck with the senate hearing, the entire LPO network and more is behind you.....

Warmest regards

Nandini & Satish

From:

Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2020 at 2:31 pm

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: You have my total support!!

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hello Christine

The accusations that have been levelled at you over the last few days have left me totally ashamed of my fellow Australians.

I am similarly ashamed that our Prime Minister had the audacity to publicly ridicule you in Parliament without first seeking clarification of the events leading up to and surrounding the gifting of the watches to your executive members.

I can't speak more highly of you, your team and those at Australia Post in Townsville with whom I have had the pleasure of working for several years.

Please accept my apologies for their behaviour, I am so sorry that you have had this happen to you.

Kind regards

Nikki

Director

Hi Christine,

I hope you are well. As the locals say (I am a pom too) "what a crock of s*it"! So, the the report found you "acting within proper Australia Post board procedures" which essentially allowed you to make bonuses of up to \$150,000 without board approval."yet the Government hung you out to dryI am /was a Somo fan but he should be

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ashamed and embarrassed.

Your career is one that I can only dream of and you will I am sure take another top industry role in the months to come.

Kind regards,
Adrian

Hi Christine,

I'm absolutely disgusted by what's been happening over the past week and am just reaching out to say "are you ok?"... hardly helpful considering the scale but the support you have given me this year was more appreciated than you could ever know and although we're at different ends of the business spectrum, people are people.

I'm so angry to see that you've been targeted for what I and many others would believe to be a trivial matter.

I believe that you and your team, through your initiatives and hard work have turned this company around and I also believe that a reward for the work performed is entirely deserved. It just goes to show that you value their efforts as you do with all staff.

Personally, I see this as a distraction tactic by the government as they have far bigger issues which need tackling.

Anyway, for what it's worth, you and your team will always have my 100% support.

Take care and look after yourself through this difficult time and I hope to see you back where you belong as soon as possible.

Regards,

Phill

Hi Christine

I have not met you personally but my business partner [REDACTED] has. We are both pharmacists who saw what you achieved at Blackmores. We are the main partners in

[REDACTED] of medications. I sent you an email and I was amazed and thrilled when you not only responded but involved one of your senior managers to help us. The changes you have made at Australia Post have been outstanding and the service I get from Aust Post when a parcel is on the way is excellent.

The attacks you came under last week were outrageous and clearly someone in your organization is leaking against you. I wanted to send you a note of support. Hold your head high and don't succumb to the pressure of lightweights. I am writing to the PM to express my strong displeasure on his attack on you in parliament last week. We need outstanding leaders like you to transform businesses like Aust Post. Hang tough!!

Regards

[REDACTED]
Chairman

Date: Sunday, 1 November 2020 at 9:15 pm

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Sir Peter Cosgrove [REDACTED]

Hi Christine

Just been wanting to remind you, you are such an inspiring leader - full of courage, Drive, vision and curiosity. You must know how much you inspire so many people - men and women. Have a good week ahead.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Wednesday, 28
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: support from [REDACTED]

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Dear Christine

This short email is to send you my support during this time. I wondered if you might gain some solace in the "No Speech" piece below.

Very best wishes,

[REDACTED]

The HRS Group Pty Ltd

[REDACTED]

Please consider the environment before printing this email

On 28/10/20, 11:46 pm, "Brian [REDACTED]" wrote:

Hi Christine,

Just a quick note to say hang in there. Having felt the fury of the mob myself, I know it's not much fun. Nice to see you're getting a lot of support from your front line. I found that sort of thing a real comfort when you're under fire.

You've got a lot to be proud of, so stay strong.

Take care
Brian

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From: CEW [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 29 October 2020 at 3:56 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Deborah [REDACTED] sent you a message

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Dear Christine

I write to you as a fellow CEW member. We have not met so I hope you don't mind me emailing. I wanted to send my support to you during these no doubt professionally and personally disturbing times. I can't imagine the personal toll this is taking. Please know you are in many people thoughts. Should there be any support I can provide, please do not hesitate to let me know. Regards

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 29 October 2020 at 10:46 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Richard / R-Co Brand / message

Dear Christine

I would like to extend my best wishes to you.

You may not remember me, but you offered me the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my thoughts on Brand Australia Post, following an introduction by [REDACTED]. Although my initiative did not receive any traction from your delegated management, the fact that I was able to have a meeting with you, was significant to me.

Significance of actions is a core attribute of leadership.

I believe your actions at Australia Post to reward achievement have been grossly manipulated, which has had an impact upon your reputation.

Its always been interesting to me how the frame of righteousness is often applied to movers and shakers in business.

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The evidence of your contribution to moving parcels and shaking up outdated beliefs is impressive.

Offering support to you at this time and wishing you and family the spirit of courage.

Kind regards and I am sure you are supported by many business leaders who know the sacrifices of stepping up and engaging with passion and belief to get the job done.

Please take care of yourself at this time.

Richard

[REDACTED]
From: [REDACTED]
Date: Friday, 30 October 2020 at 10:33 am
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Thank you

Good morning Christine,
My name is Daniel, I work at the [REDACTED] Post Office.
I just wanted to pass on my thanks and appreciation for the work you do in our behalf.
I have worked for Australia Post for 18 1/2 years and have seen much in my time here that has helped me to see that those in charge have heavy responsibilities that most of us are unaware of, a lot of which goes unrecognised.
I appreciate you and your team worked very hard to keep our organisation running as smooth as possible through Covid, you lead by example and have closely monitored our situation. The effort you made has done much to assure us that we are in good hands.
Although i cannot presume to speak for anyone other than myself, I know I am not alone when I say that I have confidence in the direction our organisation is taking, due to its leadership, and I very much appreciate the way you personally have empowered us to focus on good customer service.
Thank you very much Christine. Many of us are very happy with your work.

Kind Regards,
Daniel [REDACTED]
From: [REDACTED]
Date: Friday, 30 October 2020 at 2:13 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Personal Note

Good afternoon, Christine

Hopefully you will receive this email.

I just wanted to wish you well in light of the current attacks on you, which seem quite unwarranted. People often do not think about the damage their words inflict. I hope you prevail.

Don't let how you feel make you forget what you deserve.

All the best.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Friday, 30 October 2020 at 5:44 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Hoping y

Christine,

I posted my \$5 today to the PM, keep staying strong. I hope you get some rest this weekend, our thoughts are with you.

[REDACTED]

Christine I don't think the Prime minister should have spoken to you like that. I felt for you and think he was "well out of order", he could've spoke to you in a room but to do that I thought it was pretty low.

I do hope you don't get too down about it Stay positive and remember the time we spoke at Strathfield Dc about when you moved to London at a young age, your a tough women.

Kevin.

From: Gabby
Date: Sunday, 1 November 2020 at 8:07 am
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Thank you !

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi Christine ,

I wanted to send you a private note of support at this difficult period .
You are 100% correct in this case , you are doing a tremendous job at the most difficult of years , and remuneration of top executives is something that should be done and encouraged at all companies - large and small .

Stay strong , it looks like everyone is behind you.

[REDACTED] Could you please provide me with an address , I'd love to send you a signed copy and some extras ...

Thank you !

Gabby

Hi Christine

Thanks for the feedback. I'm so glad to see you're still right there with us. Here's hoping that remains the case! I've survived 3 CEOs and many Boards and you're way out in front, in my mind.

Take care.

Brett

On 28 Oct 2020, at 18:42,

Dear Christine,

I trust you are well, I would like to show my support for you and send you this quote I found on the internet.

You have done a wonderful job during the time of the pandemic. Thank you for your leadership.

Kind regards,

Anna [REDACTED] PDO

From: Brian

Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2020 at 12:15 pm

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Hope you are well [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Dear Christine,

I just wanted to reach out to you to offer my on-going support and well wishes.

As our [REDACTED] Business Champion and someone I have had the pleasure of working with and knowing through the years I felt it was critically important to simply say I and some of my colleagues at the [REDACTED] Secretariat are thinking of you.

Personally speaking I would like to say 'thank you' for your kindness and on-going support of the [REDACTED]. Equally, can I also say I am unashamedly one of your many, many hundreds of supporters who admires your visionary leadership style, resilience, empathy and courage.

I sincerely hope you and your family remain well through this difficult period and have no doubt we will see you back at the helm sooner rather than later.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Please look after yourself and take care and if it's OK with you I would like the opportunity to stay in touch.

Kind Regards,
Brian

Brian

From: Darren"
Date: Wednesday, 28 October 2020 at 2:08 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: Email of Support

Hi Christine
You don't know me, I manage [REDACTED], I just want to give you a vote of support.
I am disgusted with what you were put through this week.
I'm sure you will have the strength to see it through. You have my support.
Regards
Darren
Postal Manager

On 27 Oct 2020, at 20:46, wrote:

It sounds like you're in the same class as Billy Mitchell an American air pilot who was far sighted as to what one should do but others would not have a bar of it in WW1 but in the long term was proved right. He was instrumental in enabling the allies to win WW1 by effectively cutting (or reducing) the enemies supply lines to the front that what it seems to point to from my understanding of a dvd I have watched Unfortunately sometimes those that do not understand and sometimes get quite agitated about it in the short term sometimes prevail. Hold your head up high even if those that do not understand prevail.
Regards
David

From:
Date: Tuesday, 27 October 2020 at 6:55 pm
To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]
Subject: I hope you are well

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Dear Christine,

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

I am so sorry to hear of your troubles at this point in time. We met briefly last year and I didn't get the opportunity to tell you how grateful I was for you being our CEO. You are such a down to earth person and so relatable. I admire your values and the direction you have taken Australia Post. Please do not give up. We call you the Queen at work, and not in a derogatory manner, but simply because you are amazing. No one has a bad word to say about you. I truly hope you get through this and stay with Aussie Post. You really are the best thing that has ever happened to us. We get to have fun as well as work. We get to celebrate Christmas again. It is clear that you are just a great person. Please hang in there. And if you don't, well just know that you are the best we have ever had. I wish you nothing but the best. Thank you for everything and for being you.

Tara

From:

Date: Tuesday, 27 October 2020 at 11:07 am

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Thank you :)

Good morning Christine

It is a very uncertain time for all and what a horrible year 2020 has been. I have just returned for leave for a week and during that time I witnessed the unfair level of media attention that was given Australia Post following senate estimates. As usual, it is disappointing to again see the media heavily focus on only one side of the story. I have explored the benefits of the arrangement with Bank@Post and I was not surprised to read that the deal secured \$70B in revenue (money that can be used for essential equipment for our people and given back to the shareholder). Thank you for supporting the people who undoubtedly worked their backsides off to set up such an arrangement and it goes without saying that their actions saved an uncountable number of jobs and established financial support for regional communities into the future (coming from a rural community of 2,000 people in regional NSW I can vouch for the benefits of such a deal and the security it has provided to my small hometown).

I would like to offer this e-mail as a show of my support to you and the dedication you show to this business. With you in the captains role I am confident in the future of AusPost, the security your leadership provides to myself personally and my young family (beautiful wife, gorgeous twins – boy and girl aged 5-months and of course our loveable pooch). As an experienced CEO I am certain you have been exposed to media attention previously however I'm sure that it does take its psychological toll on anyone. Please take care, stay safe and I am looking forward to seeing you back at the helm of Australia Post Group.

Kind Regards,

Matt

Hi Christine

The headlines on the west coast, you have a lot of support, please continue your great work and lead us into the future.

<https://www.perthnow.com.au/news/australia/stores-threaten-to-strike-in-support-of-stood-down-australia-post-chief-executive-christine-holgate-ng-b881704355z>

regards

Theo

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

On 26 Oct 2020, at 09:59,

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi Christine,

My wife, Helen and I want you to know that we support and have every confidence in you.

You have revitalised our business, us and AusPost in general and we thank you for that.

In our eyes the banking deal has been an absolute boon to our business and we fully support rewarding those who worked to put all of this together.

Australian politics at the moment is very partisan and populist and unfortunately for you, you are a soft target, although quite undeserving when one considers what is going on, rorts wise with this government.

We hope you can stay in a safe place and come through this to once again take the helm.

Our best wishes,

Helen and Gary

On 26 Oct 2020, at 09:22, " wrote:

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Christine

Wow – what a week!!

As is always the case – the tall poppies in this country have to be trimmed – and sadly they've set their eyes on you.

Take heart – this means you actually doing good things 😊 and we, a small LPO in [REDACTED], wish you every success and support you in every way.

You have done so much for the LPOs since you took over AP; and we are all eternally grateful.

Our thoughts are with you and your family during this trying time.

Kind regards

Graeme & Debbie

On 26 Oct 2020, at 07:13,

>

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

> Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]
>
> Hi Christine
>
> How are you?
>
> We are the licensees of [REDACTED] We'd like to thank you what you have contributed to LPOs and just would like to let you know we are all supporting you from here.
>
> All the best!
>
> Jamie & Ginny

On 25 Oct 2020, at 23:17, Deepak

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi Christine,

I am at loss of words to write this email and I know last few days would have been really stressful, reaching out to say that we [REDACTED] lpo absolutely stand by you in this situation.

This situation seems more of political issue than the reward for hard working employees and whist board was scared to face senate , we at San Remo lpo are proud that you were brave to face and answer senate estimates.

We have written to the Federal MP and prime ministers office expressing concerns as to how things have changed for better under your leadership and how Bank@Post service enchaced payments have allowed Lpos to keep the doors open .

Without your support and able leadership more than 2800 LPOs will be in ruins, you are in our thoughts and we will do whatever is possible to get the word across that you did nothing wrong.

Sending you all the strength and look forward to see you one day [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Victoria.

With Warm Regards,

Dear Christine,

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Sorry didn't send you a message earlier, we have been following up the news every hour and discussing what we could have done to help.

Just letting you know we are all 100% supporting you and we all will never give up.

When life didn't worked my way, I always looked at this quote:

“You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.”
- *Steve Jobs*

Stay strong!

Best Regards,
Kevin

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Good evening Christine,

You have my support and that of all LPO owners who I seen commenting. I posted on the ministers and Morrison's Facebook, have written a letter with my \$5. I sincerely hope you beat these mongrels, never see such outrage over these so called politicians and our taxes they waste. We appreciate the work you have done for the LPOs. Good luck.

Cheers.

Liz

On 25 Oct 2020, at 21:05,

>

> Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it

to [REDACTED]

>

> CHRISTINE HOLGATE

>

> Hi Christine, we've never met, & not likely to, but I'd like to introduce myself.

> My name is [REDACTED] and I'm a Licensee of an LPO at [REDACTED] for seven years.

>

> I'm absolutely distressed & distraught at your recent & unfair treatment and the events that have been unfolding against you.

>

> You have been targeted for what reason I do not know and please believe me when I say you have the support of the majority of LPOs, because of your innovative

restructuring, hard work, ideas that you have put in place, for the first time over the last 18 months I have felt that I have a viable business, and also for the first time in a long time I have money in the bank, thank you.

> The thank you payment you gave us was a huge boost for us people being on the front line, feeling not only threatened by the virus but also the abuse we get daily from customers because things aren't going their way and they are not in a good psychological place being in lockdown and having to work from home.

> In saying that I am extremely grateful that I have a viable business (at the moment) to be able to keep myself supported as well as my five team members.

> I Believe that you have the best interest of Australia Post at heart and you are passionate about it.

> I will be open and honest, and when you first came on board I was very wary especially after our treatment by the last CEO & him leaving with a smile on his face and his pockets well lined AFTER he'd run AP into the ground.

>

> I am fully aware that the watches are not the real issue, you have been blindsided by the Boy's Club, And nothing upsets me more, as I am a woman in a man's world as well, and quite often get asked by people Im dealing with, if I want to talk things over with my husband before I spend money, or dealing with tradesman did I want hubbies input first (husband passed three years ago)

>

> I find myself asking why did none of board get stood down too?

> · How much revenue has Bank@Post added to Govt coffers???

> · Are rewards and bonuses specifically precluded under AP policy?

>

> Im part of a 1300 member strong group on Facebook called LPOs United (that has been going for many years) and as a show of support a great many of us are sending \$5 to PM Scott Morrison, in registered post envelopes to go towards the payment of the watches, trifling it may seem but letting you know the support is there.

>

> I can't put myself in your shoes, I can only try & imagine how you feel being persecuted, & hung out to dry for no wrong doing, all for the benefit of the PM grandstanding, all it did was make him come across as the bully he is, he certainly showed his true colours.

>

> I feel sick as I've heard reports back from people that have actually met you & know how passionate you are about Post, we are all hoping & praying you don't leave, don't get pushed out & that you have a very good Lawyer.

>

> I can only wish you well, & hope that you hang in there as we are all behind you.

>

> My kindest regards

> Gaye

> Sent from Gaye's iPhone

From:

Date: Sunday, 25 October 2020 at 7:13 pm

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

To: Christine Holgate

Subject: Re: FIGHT THEM. DO NOT CAVE-IN

Well, this link is why you should no longer stand down , headed: **Australian post offices threaten to strike in protest of Christine Holgate's treatment**

<https://www.facebook.com/SkyNewsAustralia/videos/746788879511923/>

From:

Date: 25 October 2020 at 7:19:41 pm AEDT

To: "Holgate, Christine" [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: [REDACTED]

Dear Mrs Christine Holgate,

I would like to express my full support for you and your entire team. I consider the attitude towards you as dishonest and undeserved. I hope you get the helm of the Australia Post back in your hands as soon as possible.

You are the most successful CEO of our organisation. You are the only one who dared to change the system for a better future of the organisation because you are strong, competent and powerful. That is why all these are dishonest attacks.

I am with you, I trust and fully support you. I would do anything if I could help you!

Thank you very much for the support you have given me in regards to my role in Australia Post. I'm very grateful to you for that and I will always be obliged to you.

Sincerely yours,

Vanya

Dear Mr Morrison.

I am writing to you today in support of Australia Post CEO Ms Christine Holgate. I have been a Licensed Post Office Licensee for over 23 years and I it is only under her leadership that we have become a more viable small business. After years of neglect from previous CEO's and both sides of politics, it is only now that we are seeing that light at the end of the tunnel and our business are recovering.

During this pandemic Ms Holgate has lead Australia Post with true insight and care in very uncertain times. As frontline essential service workers we remained open for business in every suburb, every village, every town, rural, remote, regional and metro in every electorate, serving every Australian across this country. Australia Post is at the front door of every Australian home nearly everyday and we are championed by a CEO who cares about us and every person who makes up the Australia Post workforce. We matter to her and she matters to us.

Ms Holgate has proven herself in the time that she has been CEO of Australia Post. During 2020 Australia Post has had to deal with volumes of mail never seen before at this time of year. Bank branches around the country closed down and thankfully the bank@post agreement forged by the Executive of Post has been the saviour of many customers being able to access banking services at their local Post Offices. Living in a pandemic is scary enough without having the added pressure of no bank access especially for our traditional customers.

I plead with you to show Ms Holgate your support.

Yours sincerely

Gail

Susan Smith

An open letter to Christine Holgate

Sorry Christine,

Yesterdays events have left me feeling physically ill.

It is evident that you, being the figurehead of AP, are being offered up as a sacrificial lamb for your bosses (both the Board and the Minister), I do not believe for one minute that you do not have the best interest of Australia Post at heart – or that you have not felt the frustrations and burdens of this horrendous year, and all it has meant to our business.

I am acutely aware that the watches are not the real issue, but that someone with an agenda has fed their purchase to the Senate, in a malicious manner, with the intent of causing mischief.

You have been blindsided by the Boy's Club. Those Kingmakers who sit quietly in the background and ensure that their deeds are done. There are questions to be asked;

- Why did none of the Board attend with you?
- Do people really believe that you are so stupid as to wear a \$40,000 Bulgari Serpenti watch to a hearing where a \$3k Cartier was going to be your undoing??
- How much revenue has Bank@Post added to Govt coffers???
- Are rewards and bonuses specifically precluded under AP policy, or are they at the discretion of the Board????

Your encouragement of Licensees and your focus on elevating our business profile has been refreshing, I believe you recognise that the 'saving grace' of AP (if it is not beyond redemption) will be those 1,000s of us, who are invested in our communities at the grass roots level, and who support and service our clientele with, not only local knowledge – but genuine care.

I hope we all come out of this stronger – with our eyes open wide, and a knowledge of who our true enemies are.

In closing I would like to say that this is my opinion only – and does not reflect the position of this page, its Admins or other Licensees.

Sincerely,

Sue

Hi Christine

This is just a support message from our LPO. None of us agree with or like this witch hunt you are going through.

God bless and our best wishes to you through this trying time. Hope to have the privilege of meeting you one day....

Warmest regards

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

On 24 Oct 2020, at 15:45,

Hello Christine,

Sending you the strongest message of support I can.

I believe you are doing an excellent job, relentlessly seeking the best outcome for Australia Post and the broader Australian community.

IMHO you live and breathe our TIES values day in, day out, so I hope all at Post support you and your mental health in the face of this blizzard of attacks; the issues in these attacks are not “scandals” at all.

In comparison to other issues in Corporate Australia and Government e.g. AML failure by Westpac on millions of occasions including the enablement of child pornography, \$44m graft issues on Border Force patrol boats, the Aged Care deaths due to Federal Govt failure in the pandemic, the issues alleged against you, are insignificant.

The very personal attacks on you **are frankly a disgrace and verge on professional bullying.**

I’m sure the vast majority of the Australia Post workforce and the broader community, staunchly support you too.

I have e-mailed the Chairman on the same basis.

So hang in there Christine and we look forward to a speedy investigation that fully vindicates you, so we can welcome you back to the team.

All the best, Simon

Hi Christine

Thinking of you and sending you big hugs. Hope you're ok.

Tamerlaine

Hi Christine,

> Just a quick note to send you our support through this investigation, we appreciate the time and effort you have put in to the LPO section of Australia Post.

>

> Trish & Corey

Hi Christine,

I just wanted to reach out and tell you that you have my unequivocal support through this highly politicised and very unfair scrutiny they are subjecting you to.

You acted decently and generously, wanting to reward your team for their very hard work and going above and beyond. These are our intrinsic values here at Post – no matter what the salary or pay

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level, we all strive to embody a work ethic that benefits the company, not the individual. These ethical pillars come down from the top, and nothing you have done contradicts them. Nothing they can stir up in the press robs that of its basic truth, so hold on to that fact.

It smacks of a quite misogynistic witch hunt at the moment, and I encourage you to stand strong and firm, Christine. What a world, when a company boss is criticised for kindly saying a special thank you to her hard-working team. Their salaries are not the point, your salary is not the point, and neither is mine – what we strive for together is the point!

I'm disappointed for you, I'm truly disappointed in the seemingly deep vein of pure dislike that is felt about our company by many and offended by it, now that I also proudly work for AP. But I want you to know we are all behind you.

Sending you a big virtual hug!

Regards, **Marnie**

Dear Christine,

I wanted to reach out today with this message of support. The treatment that you have received this week is a disgrace. Unjust and unethical with a generous helping of misogyny thrown in. Like so many I am appalled at how you have been treated. This is behaviour that should never be tolerated. It is bullying, sexist and political, the antithesis of the culture that you have built at Post. As a society we need to be better.

Please know that you are supported and respected.

Take care of yourself over the next four weeks. As a team we stand beside you.

With best regards

Penny

Dear Christine,

I am writing to you because I am disgusted at the government's treatment of you. I think that the four people who received the watches deserve recognition for bringing the banks on board is a real coup for Australia Post, as it will be so convenient for the public, as well as the revenue it will bring in. Twelve thousand is trivial compared with thirty million for a three million piece of land. I hope that you survive as CEO as I think that you have done a good job. You can't turn a dinosaur around in three years.

All the best,
Gunnar

Hi Christine,

It was so frustrating to see the events unfold yesterday. Hope you are going ok.

I wanted you to know that my team and I are very disappointed with how you were treated. Like most people across the organisation, we know you are doing an amazing job and a phenomenal leader who focuses on her people and communities.

You are a great role model and have made me want to do better. We just hope we can do more to support you.

Best regards,
Jason

Dear Christine.

I'm [REDACTED]

I'm in the Customer Contact Centre (Melbourne), under international. For the most part, along with other things, I take the inbound calls from our customers regarding their international enquirers. Yes, it has been some journey this year.

I wanted to reach out and let you know that I think you are doing a great job!

I have seen the news and I can only imagine the stress this has put on you during this time. We sometimes forget that behind the salaries, the red and white logo and the white blazers, our bosses are people too.

The news media can be quite discouraging to one's spirit, particularly in a year with continuous adversity. It might not seem like it, but you are in the thoughts of the contact centre every time you are brought into the news. I think you are a strong woman to continually hold your head high, but even the strongest can fatigue from time to time.

Essentially, I want to check in and make sure you are OK!

Not that you need my approval, but think you are doing a great job. I have been at Aus Post since 2017 and since the beginning of this pandemic, I have felt the ongoing support you have been providing. Everything from the speedy working from home rollout of the continuous emails encouraging us to keep on going and offering the EAP services.

I know from working in the call centre, people are always happy to point out what's wrong, but never acknowledge the hard work you and I do with the rest of the network to keep it moving.

I want to say "keep your head high and keep doing the best you can do", as you have been doing all along.

Please make sure you are doing at least one thing a day to make yourself smile.

My thoughts are with you,

Kind Regards

Customer Services

Christine Holgate,

>

> Whilst we have never met or corresponded previously we felt it was important to let you know that we are thinking of you during this difficult time.

> We operate a small post office in regional New South Wales and we are both disgusted by the way you have been treated by the Prime Minister.

> We understand and appreciate the efforts put in by the team members that negotiated the Bank at Post agreements. I'm sure if these people were rewarded with a cash bonus

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or gift cards then no one would have batted an eyelid. You have become a victim of pathetic political games.

> Please know that we are on your side and we will be making the Prime Minister aware of our feelings.

> Stay strong and power to you and your family.

>

> Kind regards,

> Nicky and Peter

Dear Christine,

After watching the news for the past 24 hours, I felt the need to email you.

I am proud to work for Australia Post and I love my job and the people I work with.

In turn I am so glad that you are our CEO, I think you do an amazing job. Your vision for the future is inspirational, your dedication and passion to achieving much more is outstanding, and your leadership instils a sense of belonging which in turn makes us want to do better.

I am so upset by the way you have been portrayed and please know that many of us at Australia Post are with you. I stand by you.

Kim

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Thursday, 31 December 2020 at 8:53 am

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Thank you and best wishes for 2021.

Thank you for replying Christine, it's been a pleasure having you at our helm.

I do hope and wish that you do return to the fold but I do understand this is a very politically charged issue along with much else I'm sure the public is not aware of.

It brought my family, staff and many licensees joy to see the findings of the investigation brought to light. In my opinion, many people owe you not only a great debt for you having Australia post brought to where it is today but for the horrible way you've been treated.

I wish you all the best for your future and hope that our paths cross sometime again in the future.

Please stay in touch.

Sohil [REDACTED]

Operations Manager

[REDACTED]
Hello Christine

Christine

For your information and records I have attached a statement from Gwynneth and me relating to our recent experience.

It is our intention to forward it to a number of senior politicians to highlight positive issues rather than negativity.

We would also like to send a copy to the Chair or Corporate Secretary of the Australia Post Board. Unfortunately that email contact is not as easily found as your own. Could you please forward a copy on behalf of Gwynneth and me.

With best regards for the future
Andrew and Gwynneth

On 23 Oct 2020, at 20:13,

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Dear Christine,

I don't know exactly how your are feeling at the moment but I'm guessing that it's not great. We met very briefly in Adelaide last week after your presentation. My name is Michael [REDACTED] and I own an LPO in [REDACTED] I told you that I thought you were doing a great job.

I meant it then and it still holds true today as I write this letter. I do not believe you have done anything wrong.

We bought our LPO 16 years ago and during that time have been though a tough time with Australia Post on many issues. Particularly poaching of customers. But we are still here today fighting on.

I have often stated to Australia Post management that there is an army of people within the LPOs willing to fight for new business, offer ideas, support new products, etc. Could they possibly imagine how strong the overall army would be if we were not fighting each other ! An army that was proud to be a part of Post rather than have to make excuses.

Then along came Christine Holgate who rallied the team, gave them common purpose, was inclusive, outlined a vision and is highly supportive of her team.

We don't know each other but I have picked up through presentations and interviews that you are a highly capable leader who wants to do the right thing, the right thing by employees, the right thing by customers , the right thing by all stakeholders. This was my mantra when I held General Manager roles. I even wrote it into employment contracts with my senior managers.

You don't meet great leaders often so I dearly hope that somehow you will be able to get through this and be our General Patton. Take us forward Christine the army is behind you. There are many LPOs who feel as I do. I have written to Scott Morrison to let him know how I feel.

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

Kind regards,

Michael

On 23 Oct 2020, at 04:43,

>

> Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

>

> Dear Christine,

> I for one , cannot sleep right now & can assure you I mustn't be the only Licensee in Australia in the same boat?

> Horrible news today & firstly I'd like to ask if 'You're ok!?'

> You certainly don't deserve this political BS!

> Don't you worry we all see straight through the crime , which in itself , is so petty in the scheme of things!

> Even so, you obviously had good intent for your ex team ... even though these people have just jumped at the opportunity to go & put a spot light on it!

> Look, we (The Licensee network & [REDACTED]) are Just so concerned for you right now ...

> PLEASE PLEASE Don't leave us!!

> I know the last thing in your mind would be wanting to work along side Minister Fletcher & Scomo right now but AP STILL needs you !!!!!

> So if it's just an honest temporary 'standing down ' do it, let the media & the government have their day (for a day) because that's all it's going to feel like at the end of four weeks or so BUT please don't go anywhere!

> This will all pass, this will all blow over, the average Australian will forget about this by probably lunch time tomorrow so integrity wise if only Australia could see just what you've truly achieved in your short time at Australia's largest & one of its oldest organisations (the average Aussie wouldn't bat an eye lid) over this!!

> So if u were waking up thinking of writing some kind of resignation letter... STOP!

Throw it in the bin! Get in front of that mirror , look at your self & you remind yourself 'I am the CEO of AP!'

> If there's any media contacts that you can share between Angela Cramp from LPOG & myself as part of APLAC... please don't hesitate to share, we will do everything WE can to prove to Australia & the government that we Love you, AP loves you, you've done so much already in such a short period & that Australia needs you!

> Take care,

> Please hang in there & we're all thinking of you!!

>

> Scott

>

Christine

I would like to strongly convey my full support. You have been a trail blazer since arriving at Australia Post and we value your achievements to date.

I believe Australia Post are a commercial organisation and rewarding our staff is an important aspect of business. 2020 has been a challenging year for Australia Post

and many outsiders do not fully appreciate what you and your team have overcome.

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I would also like to thank you for the tremendous faith and support that you have shown the LPO network. In the past three years you have achieved so much more than all of your predecessors have and at the same time bridged the gap that has existed between a corporate and LPO. Somewhere in all of this, you have also navigated through a pandemic.

Watching the media streams tonight, I couldn't help but feel for you as endured the senate estimates committee. Its unfortunate that this issue is caught up in the political landscape Where both major parties are using this for political advantage. This country has so many challenges right now and in the years ahead, our elected members should be working together to plan on how we will endure this journey.

Im sure that common sense will prevail and our elected members will put aside their political agendas.

Please remain positive during this process and know that you have tremendous support across Australia Post and other organisations

Please take care and I look forward to you leading us into the future.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On 22 Oct 2020, at 23:20,

Hi

I just don't agree that you have to step down as CEO. I can't see how giving gifts to senior exec's affects a person's operational decision making. Especially in the times we are having at the moment. Of course, if Parliament want a investigation, then let it run its course but you still should be at the helm.

PTC 3

On 22 Oct 2020, at 23:36,

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi Christine

Hang in there

Don't let them beat you down

You're the best CEO Post has had

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Best wishes

John.

On 23 Oct 2020, at 00:35,

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi Christine,

I just wanted to let you know that as an Australia Post employee of 33 years you are by far the best CEO we have ever had.

I cannot understand this political witch hunt that is currently going on . I think people have lost site of the great job Australia Post is doing , given all the obstacles thrown at it during this Coronavirus crisis.

Keep strong and positive.

Kind Regards,

Dennis

On 23 Oct 2020, at 02:52, Simon [REDACTED]
wrote:

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Australian tall poppy syndrome alive and well

Let me know if I can do anything

Warm regards Simon

[REDACTED]

Sydney NSW2000.
Australia.

[REDACTED]

Hi Christine,

I just wanted to reach out personally and say that I am really sorry to see how things have transpired today. [REDACTED] and the rest of my team are 100% behind you with everything that you do here at post, the way you care about the people and our customers and make sure that everyone feels like we are all 1 unit together. For you to be questioned about recognising and rewarding individuals for their contributions to the Bank@Post deal that has not only been such a big contributor to the financial position of Australia Post but secured the relevance and importance of our post offices especially in regional and rural areas is sad to see. I can honestly say, whether it be seeing how you respond to the complaints before my team picks it up or your personability that you have shown me, in getting to know me through our Customer Services BPR's,

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makes me so proud to be working for someone who cares so much for the company, our people and our customers. It doesn't change anything with regards to the investigation, but I just wanted to bring some comfort to you during this time like you have done to all of us so many times over. Enjoy some time to unwind, and look forward to seeing you back leading us into peak and beyond.

Yours Sincerely

On 22 Oct 2020, at 9:30 pm, Mary

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Hi 🙌

I am sorry for you what I heard today, when going gets tough the tough get going please take care and don't forget stand tall and be proud of who you are and be kind always to yourself don't forget you're a tough cookie 🍪

Mary

From: Michelle

Date: 22 October 2020 at 18:47:55 AEDT

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: "Holgate, Christine" [REDACTED]

Subject: Christine Holgate - Enquiry

Expecting this email? If suspicious click on the 'Report Phishing' button in Outlook. If you are using a shared mailbox, forward it to [REDACTED]

Dear Minister Fletcher and Minister Cormann

I refer to your press release in regard to the investigation into Australia Post CEO, Christine Holgate.

Are you seriously holding an enquiry over \$12,000? \$3,000 per watch for four employees? Am I oversimplifying this????

Depending on the definition of "lucrative" is \$12,000 an unreasonable thank you bonus for the staff? If the deal was \$24K, it's unreasonable. If it is \$12M, then I don't think it is. It's no different than that someone in sales getting commission on their sales. Maybe I'd feel differently if it was a \$30K watch, but again, perspective on "lucrative".

I get that I am just a humble Australian citizen but I am more concerned with Government wasting money on an investigation than Ms Holgate acknowledging her staff and giving them a bonus. What about a "please explain" rather than a full out investigation. And again, the humble citizen is not privvy to all the machinations of government but if you think there are system and wide ranging issues within Australia Post - then go for it. But otherwise please be more frugal with our tax payer

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dollars. Ms Holgate is accused of spending tax payer money, is the government not doing the same?

Sincerely Michelle

Hello Christine,

I am just an average Joe Blo – I live in Toowoomba Qld. I have just read a report from The Citizens Party (Robert Barwick & Craig Isherwood). see below:

Australian Citizens Party

Media Release Wednesday, 4 November 2020

Craig Isherwood, National Secretary

PO Box 376, COBURG, VIC 3058

Phone: 1800 636 432

Email: [REDACTED]

Website: <https://citizensparty.org.au>

Dear Christine,

I have been dismayed, disappointed and deeply saddened by the treatment you have received in the press over the past couple weeks and wanted to reiterate that I learned a lot from working under your leadership at Blackmores. It also seems to me that you lead Australia Post with the same dedication, passion for organisation and employees, and business acumen that I witnessed at Blackmores and I am sure that this won't be the last transformation you lead.

I hope you are doing okay and have something fun planned for the summer!

Best,
Gemma

Dear Christine,

At least all women in Oz are sad your brilliant career in charge of a massive organisation has ended abruptly.

We have been proud to have you as the Captain of Australia Post.

We send our Best Wishes and look forward to reading about your next appointment within the world of business.

Yours sincerely,

Lois & Noel

Hi Christine

My name is Connor, you might remember me from when you came to the [REDACTED] and sat by my side during some International phone calls.

I felt very empowered to be one of the lucky ones to have you seat with me. I was about to take on a Postal Manager secondment, ive recently secured the nominal role.

I would like to say, that you were by far the best Leader, that I have ever worked under with Aus Post. I'm sad to learn of your departure.

I wanted to reach out, to let you know I wish you all the very best. Thank you for being open and honest, thank you for allowing everyone to shine and thank you for all that you have done for Aus Post.

I'll never forget that I had the Aus Post CEO sit by me, very proud moment. You were so warm and inviting. Inquisitive and down to earth. You've made working with Post an enjoyable experience to many, including myself.

Thanks again Christine,

Connor
Postal Manager

Dear Ms Holgate

Although I have criticisms of Australia Post, I appreciated that you directed your staff to take time to address my concerns when I raised them with you. I thank you for that.

I believe you have been ill-used in the bonuses nonsense, a pawn to deflect away from the many 'difficult' issues facing the Morrison government, which of their own making. I wish you the best of luck in the future.

Kind regards

Lin
Lin

Hi Christine,

You have been treated very shabbily by the government and AP Board. The latter may yet get its come-uppance if they have been negligent in other ways.

I wrote to the PM and sent him \$5.00 telling him "I was appalled" at his opportunistic behavior towards you in Parliament for all the good that's done!

\$30 million paid by government for a \$3 million property pushed aside with you as the distraction.

Your predecessor paid 3-4 times what you received for no better achievements than yours but when you reward someone for a job well done with a relatively small "handful of coppers" this is the belated consequence is very disappointing! Distorted perspective!

Anyway it is what it is. You will go on and prosper.

We License holders will just have to hope we get a worthy replacement.

You have a lot of friends even if we've not met you personally.

All the very best to you,
Tony

Hi Christine;

The following BBC World News article caught my eye & sympathy. I hope that others in Australia and elsewhere have defended your actions:

Australia Post boss resigns over luxury watches scandal

Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-54775199>

Over my 45-year career I have awarded many such bonuses in the form of end of the year employee \$ bonuses and, at one time, Krugerrands in a specially inscribed presentation case for exemplary performance of top performing employees, both low and high in the corporate pecking order.

My experience was that the >\$20,000 year end bonuses, per top performing employee, were soon forgotten; however, top performing employees (some lowly and some executives, broadly across the Crown Corporation), still have the Krugerrands, in their special presentation cases, proudly displayed in their homes. Those Krugerrand awards were extraordinarily well received and did much more to empower our employees than the significant \$ bonuses.

While you were forced to resign over Aus\$5,000 x 4 watches, we seem to have no problem with Bank Executives in many OECD countries awarding themselves millions of \$ each year, per executive; that Bank money was earned either directly and/or indirectly from the Public's \$s deposited in each bank (<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/sep/17/australian-ceo-bonuses-at-near-record-highs-despite-royal-commission> and <https://money.cnn.com/news/specials/storysupplement/ceopay/>).

My sympathies go out to you re our mean and cockeyed view of Public Service employees. When I was President of [REDACTED] (a B.C. Gov. owned Crown Corporation in Canada), I was flying about 300,000 kms a year on business and earning hundreds of thousands Frequent Flyer Points that I was not allowed to touch. These points were raffled off to the Crown Corporation's employees (except me), even though it was I who sat in the aircraft seats, away from my family, for more than 400 hours each year.

Is anyone in Australia speaking up for you?

All good wishes,
Stan

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[REDACTED]
President

[REDACTED]
Vancouver, B.C.

Canada

Phone: [REDACTED]

Hi Christine

With deep regret to hear of your resignation from Australia Post.

Your leadership and personable skills have not gone unnoticed by staff and we appreciate and back everything you have achieved for the organisation in your time as CEO.

I will miss your friendly chats when in the state and still hold the invitation for a hideaway at the beach in South Australia should you ever need a change of scenery!!

All the best for the future

Regards

Jane

IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THIS EMAIL COULD BE PASSED ON TO CHRISTINE:-

Hello Christine,

I wish to strongly convey my appreciation to you for your incredible contribution to the LPO network throughout Australia during your CEO tenure.

At the time of your commencement I was not alone in being just so impressed that you provided your email address to us all, inviting discussion on postal matters.

I could only imagine how many emails you would have received yet, in my case (twice) you responded to me advising how you had delegated my issues.

To us here at the coalface, be assured we were so comforted to have that support from the top- in very strenuous times.

Christine, the heartiest of sincere thanks from our team at [REDACTED] LPO for your massive efforts and passion towards our LPO network.

That will not be forgotten.

You are a victim of political opportunism from both sides of politics, and your replacement has the biggest of shoes to fill.

Every good wish to you and your family for the future, with accompanying good health.

[REDACTED] is our little piece of paradise on the coast of Central Queensland – If you ever come up our way please pop in and say hello and we'll shout you a xxxx beer (after work of course!!!)

Kind regards, Neil [REDACTED] Licensee (for 19 years)

Dear Christine, I write to wish you all the best for your future.

I apologise for the behaviour of our elected leaders, their behaviour will never be as honourable or as 'leader like' as yours.

You've been set up, and for no good reason.

May you soon return to company leadership , and may I get the chance to buy shares in it when you do!

Yours faithfully

Leo [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Hello Christine

I sincerely hope this email makes it to you.

We were saddened to read of your resignation, and disappointed in the disproportionate criticisms leveled at you.

We are sure you will remember us ([REDACTED]) You stepped in not long after you started to help us get services from Star Track, e-Parcel etc. when they would not consider us. That personal intervention allowed us to provide an efficient and reliable service to our customers (both wholesale and retail) all over Australia (and beyond). It is fair to say, since then, Australia Post has contributed to the growth of our business and brands (albeit still a long way to go). Although we've not had any contact since then - understandably you've been busy - we have not forgotten, and to this day we are most appreciative.

We wish you well in your future.

warm regards

--

Stephanie & David

If you are ever in the Banksmeadow area, call in.

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We would be honoured to have you at our office and to say a personal thank you for Australia Post.

Regards

Geoff Director, ANCIS

Christine

Maureen and I are thinking about you.

You've been terribly wronged but that's what politics always serves up!

Peter



www.switzer.com.au



Level 4, 10 Spring Street, Sydney 2000

Dear Christine,

I felt like today was a bad dream... it's like one of those moments where you can say where were you when such n such died (if you know what I mean?).

Well i was at work around mid morning when my wife called me literally in tears about the news.

You get the picture, it's been a very sad day. I think we've all been a bit lost today.

You meant so much to us all, you were just a breath of fresh air.

We cannot thank you enough for everything you did during your time.


I think the scariest thing for us all, is just what the future will bring?? I guess it's all crystal ball kind of stuff but we're all so nervous.

We tried & we will STILL from this day forward speak highly of your name when ever mentioned or raised & you will never be forgotten.

Good luck with what ever your future brings & I'm sure regardless of the next chapter it is you choose to take you'll thrive & prosper!

It was an honour to have worked with you & for you ,

Yours Sincerely ,

Hello Christine - I'm a WA based CEW member and just wanted to send a message of support. It's a tough gig being in a high profile public role and each of us is pretty readily dispensable when politics gets in the way. You have handled yourself with dignity and I sincerely hope that your career from this point on continues to reflect all the great outcomes you have achieved and this latest road bump is simply that.
Kind regards 

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I have enjoyed your time at the top of AP
I put a thing on FB telling everyone to look at PM as close as they looked at you .
I also went on ABC Brisbane Steve Austin praising your work
I have appreciated you very much and before you in 2017 I thought AP was over and they were
going to use stickers and Label's .
You will be missed Mark Lloyd Hunt
Stamp collector

Dear Christine

I was saddened today to read about your resignation. As a customer of Australia Post, we are grateful for your leadership through this unprecedented pandemic to work with us to deliver parcels to our mutual customers. In turbulent times, businesses need a strong leader and your capable hand has been on the tiller to steer the good ship AU Post through these trouble waters.
You will be missed by many.

Kind Regards,

Craig [REDACTED] Amazon Australia Operations

Not everybody goes to the same pub. In this instance THE PUB had no customers. This was just a load of bull...t.

All the best for your future. I'll be keeping a track of your movements and hopefully you'll be the boss at a enterprise that allows public investment.

Kind regards

Peter

Wishing you the best Christine. Very sad about the whole thing. I'm sure your phone is already ringing. Looking forward to your next chapter.

Let's have a glass of wine when you're next in Melbourne with a moment to spare.

Very best,

Jeremy.

[Rated in the World's Top 20 Wine Critics by the BWW Competition 2018](#)

Dear Christine, sad that you have resigned, but believe me, you weren't the problem at AP., it was the people who were supposed to be working with you instead of against you. In my first letter to you, I did say that head Office was like a real life version of " yes Minister". I think that AP has lost a CEO who could have changed the culture of the place. Thank you for taking my letters seriously, because quite frankly, I had no faith in anyone else at Head Office.

I wish you happiness and all the best.

Gunnar

Hi Christine,

I am so sorry to hear today that you have resigned. You have been a breath of fresh air to Post especially in what has been a very challenging year for Post.

Your commitment to always put the health and wellbeing of AP staff first, particularly mental health during these trying times is appreciated.

You have been harshly done by, and treated unfairly. 'This too shall pass', as they say. Hold your head high as you have not done anything wrong.

I wish you all the best in your next endeavour. No doubt where you land next will be a case of 'our loss, their gain'.

Take time out to enjoy time with your husband. There are many of us at Post who are feeling a sense of loss at today's news.

Take care, Gina

Dear Ms Holgate

I have only just heard on the media of your resignation from Australia Post.

As per your attention to the issues I emailed you in June this year, as an Australia Post customer, I was appreciative for your reply email and the assistance you ensured I received from Australia Post.

I am also quite appalled at the circumstances in which this occurred.

Whilst I am not of course privy to these matters, the behavior exhibited towards you from these sources are in my opinion uncalled for and over the top, considering the other complex issues that should be further explored over other politically sensitive matters.

Best Regards and I am sure you will come out of this situation positively. Therese

Dear Christine,

I just heard on channel 7 news that you have resigned from your job. I have been following you since dealing with Blackmores on the stock exchange.

I credit you with the manner you always communicated with myself and that has never been done by previous CEO's and that is the truth. Hacing worked at Qantas for 34 years I always communicated with past CEO's ending with Mr. Geoff Dixon.

Me and my wife wish you a very happy retirement because you were a great CEO and sad though to see you leave we are positive you will get a even better job. This is an unjust action by the prime minister.

God bless you and your family.

Regards

Esmond and Mary

You should not have let them get you down. I, for one of many, think you have done a great job. The watch giving is merely rewarding the recipients with something different to show management's appreciation of their outstanding performance.

Cheers

Tony

Hi Christine,

I am heartbroken to read the news you have resigned. I can't fathom how the events played out in the media in the last few weeks ended up with you deciding to leave Post. You have been an admirable leader with high emotional IQ. On top of this your commercial acumen has put Australia Post where we are now. Your decision to leave AP is a great loss for the organisation and I know in your career, where ever you go, you will continue to soar and aim high.

All the best to the future.

Regards,
Ces

Dear Ms Holgate

Please withdraw your resignation! We, the LPO's, need you more than ever.

As you are well aware, we had some SERIOUS issues with the previous CEO. Many of the issues you and we are still dealing with – and you are doing a fantastic job of getting this business back to being a business.

There is time to withdraw your resignation - seriously, please reconsider.....

Graeme & Debbie

Dear Christine,

I am saddened to hear of your resignation today. I want to say thank you for all the hard work and effort you have given to us to improve this company. Your enthusiasm and positivity have been contributing factors that have shaped us for the better.

I hope that you will be able to take some much-needed time to reset and breathe for your own personal well-being in the coming days and months. Wishing you all the very best for whatever you turn your hand to next, in the amazing journey of your life.

God Bless
Sharon
Postal Manager

Hi Christine,

I am a graduate [REDACTED]. I've been at Post for almost two years and I am excited to roll off the Graduate Program into a permanent role at Post soon.

I have just read the sad news of your resignation in the media, I am very sorry to hear that you are leaving. I feel that you are the victim of a political witch hunt and you have been punished completely unfairly for something that would not have raised an eyebrow in the public sector. Whilst I understand the optics may not look fantastic, Australia Post has to compete for top talent just like any other organisation, and top talent should be rewarded and recognised for exceptional work, just like the Bank @ Post deal.

I have enjoyed my first two years at Australia Post immensely. I have been lucky enough to work for some brilliant leaders, [REDACTED]. Gary has also been an exceptional EGM making me feel personally welcomed and valued in BG&I.

Today is a very sad day for Australia Post, and one I believe, the government will come to regret. I want to thank you for leading AP during my first two years at the organisation, it has been an incredible first job out of university in the corporate world. I wish you all the best for the future and I hope you can get on with your life away from this media circus as soon as possible.

One day I hope that we can meet in person and I can thank you for leading Post throughout my time here.

Cheers

Christine

I'm so sorry. If you see this message, please stay in touch.

Best regards

Jan
[REDACTED]

Dear Christine,

I might share more later, but for now I can only reiterate what I said on the phone last week – Anyone who has your goodness and integrity will always have goodness come back their way. As I have absolutely no doubt it will.

Thank-you for everything.

Andrew.

Dear Christine,

Never have I seen such support for a CEO of a company or corporation by its staff, either in Australia or internationally.

As I live in regional Australia I was not sure you would have the letter below recently published in the Newcastle Herald.

Thank you for all your work and commitment. You have obviously made the lives of many postal workers and their families better, as well as making their small businesses financially viable.

All the best,

██████████

Jo ██████████

I WISH to offer my unreserved support for Christine Holgate, the embattled CEO of Australia Post (pictured). The gift of watches at the centre of this furore ('Investigation to probe Australia Post 'gift' culture', *Newcastle Herald* 27/10) was a reward to four staff members who signed contracts that guaranteed the financial viability of the Post Office Network, guaranteeing banking facilities in post offices which is of vital importance for rural and remote towns. These gifts were suggested and approved by the then chairman of the board.

Ms Holgate has done more to ensure the viability of post offices than any CEO in 30 years. The previous CEO was claiming in senates estimates six years ago that by 2020 the federal government would be funding Australia Post to the tune of \$600 milion per annum. The current CEO has been able to reverse that prediction and provide the government with a multi-million dollar dividend. If that turnaround cost four watches, then it's a bargain.

But then, maybe Christine Holgate may have in fact embarrassed the Minister for Communications, the Hon Paul Fletcher, by being more successful than the previous male CEO counterpart contrary to the minister's agenda. As Beresfield licensee, Ms Holgate has my support.

Andrew ██████████ Licensed Post Office ██████████

Hi Christine,

I hope that you are doing ok through the challenges you are facing at the moment

I strongly feel that I should write to you and let you know of the support that you have lower in the ranks 😊

You have done a wonderful job at the helm and you have the support of the majority of all Post workers and we all really appreciate what you have done and what you continue to do for all of us during the challenges we have faced this year

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What is happening now with you is incredibly wrong and you do not deserve a moment of this however in saying this, life is funny how it throws out these curve balls and how we actually find out how resilient we can be

From what I know you are a strong woman that will come through the other side with more strength than you thought you could have had

Stay strong Christine and when you have moments of feeling low think of all the people that you have helped and all of the work you have done to bring this business back out of the trouble that it was in

You are more appreciated than you probably realise ☺

Take care
Susan
Delivery Manager

Hi Christine,

I'll keep this one short and sweet as I'm sure you are being bombarded with emails at the moment.

The way you have been dragged through the media has been disgusting.

I sincerely wish for your return soon and hope you and your family are keeping as happy and healthy as you can during this difficult times.

Regards,
Peter

Good morning Lia,

Could you please pass on my support for Christine to continue her strong professional business development for Australia Post.

Best regards Peter


International Trustee, Universal Trustees International Investment Trust,
In all matters I act as a trustee. All transactions in accordance with and under
international trust law (refer www.hcch.net www.gostickhall.com www.trusts-and-trustees.com/main2.htm)

Dear Christine ,

I would like to send you this email with my comments of support for the work you are doing and I think the chairman Lucio Di Bartolomeo is way out of line for standing you down .

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I am retired from BHP Steel as a senior executive after 41 years of service and often handed out very expensive Omega watches when my subordinates had 25 years of service or given bonuses to employees for exception performance or business results .

When the PM and chairman realise that your predecessor had a salary of over \$5 million dollars per year compared to what you earn and the results you have achieved the chairman should be very satisfied with your management and performance .

I just offer you my words of support and don't let the actions of the Chairman and the PM get you down you can hold your head high .

I have submitted a complaint to you previously case no 30813132 on the 13th aug 2020 and it was handled very professionally , so hang in there and hopefully the chairman will be relieved of his duties in the future .

Yours sincerely ,

Kevin

Good afternoon

Just wanted to say how appalled I was by the treatment Christine received from Scott Morrison.

How dare he use her to obfuscate from his party's current despicable financial management, and unworthy cabinet lineup!

I wish Christine all the best and hope she continues in her position at Australia Post, where I hear she is greatly admired and appreciated.

Thank you for your time

Dana [REDACTED]

From: Deepak [REDACTED]

Date: Friday, 1 January 2021 at 12:53 am

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Happy 2021!!

Hi Christine,

I hope you find this email healthy and happy.

Hope you are peace after the report totally exonerated you, all along we all knew that the actions of the minister was more of politics than you breaching the internal rewards and recognition rules for AUSTRALIA POST.

You were the best person (and still are) to be incharge of affairs for Australia Post and its indeed loss of Australia Post that you are no longer the group MD AND CEO.

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May 2021 bring all of us more peace and happiness, I am still an optimist and it's in my prayers that you are reinstated with respect and an apology as it was not your fault that chairman of the organisation didn't know how the delegation of financial management works in the organisation his failure to provide correct information to ministers contributed a lot to the situation which we are in today.

I wish you all the success, happiness and good health for everything you do, and if you are passing by [REDACTED] in Victoria anytime, please feel free to visit us at the LPO we will be honored and proud to be able to see you and meet you in person because we love you here at our small country LPO.

With Warm Regards,

Khyati and Deepak [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Thank you

Christine,

We would just like to offer you and Michael our very best wishes for a happy, healthy & prosperous New year.

I'm sure you are very aware of just how much you are missed.
Rest assured we are all keeping the pressure up via social media, twitter etc. & with our local MP's for your return & for the public apology that you deserve.

I think I can speak for many Licensees in saying our admiration for you has got even stronger as time has gone on. You are an inspiration to us all in the way you have handled what has so unjustly been thrown at you.

We can't wait to see you back in your chair!

Kindest regards

Maree & Greg [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

LinkedIn:

The way you were treated was a disgrace. I remember your Blackmores feature in BOSS mag a couple of years back and I've been a fan ever since. I hope this latest turn only delivers you to even better opportunities where you can feel more empowered and valued. Best wishes, Ben.

From: [REDACTED]

Date: Thursday, 31 December 2020 at 8:53 am

Australia Post Senate Inquiry: Christine Holgate Submission March 19th 2021

To: Christine Holgate [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Thank you and best wishes for 2021.

Thank you for replying Christine, it's been a pleasure having you at our helm.

I do hope and wish that you do return to the fold but I do understand this is a very politically charged issue along with much else I'm sure the public is not aware of.

It brought my family, staff and many licensees joy to see the findings of the investigation brought to light. In my opinion, many people owe you not only a great debt for you having Australia post brought to where it is today but for the horrible way you've been treated.

I wish you all the best for your future and hope that our paths cross sometime again in the future.

Please stay in touch.

Sohil [REDACTED], *Operations Manager*, [REDACTED]