

Chronology

1. Events 22/10 – onwards

(note: all information drawn from Christine Holgate's submission into Senate Inquiry Australia Post 19 March 2021)

2. Evidence regarding BCG

Christine Holgate

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology



Thursday 22nd
October 2020 1/3

- Chair confirmed with Senator Green that board meeting that took place on 22/10 was for the purpose to consider the decision to stand C Holgate aside. He confirmed he meet with the board that afternoon and confirmed he had achieved mutual agreement with me and hat I would stand aside.
- **1.30pm** The chair told me he had received a call from Minister Fletcher and the Minister had requested that I be stood down whilst an investigation in the watch purchases took place. He said he had asked Minister if he the Chair could lead the investigation. I explained the history & approved by the Chair I had not done anything wrong and the previous chair had signed a chard. I told the Chair I did not want to step down. Would support the investigation and if I did anything 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.
- I spoke to T Nutt around this time and asked his advice. He asked me what the comparison costs of the CEO & Office of CEO and Board costs under Ahmed & Myself? **Pg.39**
- **1.34pm** I text T Nutt. "The comparison is \$17M V \$6.4M". This had been prepared by the CFO. I then texted T Nutt to ask him to call me. **Pg.39**
- One of the recipients of the watches called me and said another recipient had kept their accompanying card and sent a photo of the message inside. I received a copy of the card at **2.17pm**. This was signed by John Stanhope as Chair of AP. **Pg.39**
- The Chair called again and said he had spoken to the Minister again & he was insistent that I must stand down and be investigated. I questioned the Chair if 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 I had done nothing wrong ? I emphasised I did not want to step down as it would cause chaos just as they were entering the Xmas Peak, I did offer to take annual leave and support an investigation. The chair left the call. **Pg.39**
- **2.23pm** I forwarded the photo of the signed card to T Nutt, M Ronaldson and the Chair. Both T Nutt and M Ronaldson sent a text acknowledging they had received it. **Pg.39**
- **2.25pm** I forwarded the photo to Richard Windyear, the Deputy Secretary of Communications & Ryan Bloxsom, the Chief of Staff to Minister Paul Fletcher. R Windyear was present at the Senate Estimates hearing and was in his role at the time of the Bank@Post agreements. **Copy of text Pg40.**
- **2.38pm** Minister Paul Fletcher addressed Parliament and said I would be investigated and stood down.
- **2.42pm** PM 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 actions of the management and executive. The Prime Minister stated that if there are issues to be addressed with the Board members then they will be addressed. **Pg40**
- At no time did Minister P Fletcher or 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 former chair.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Thursday 22nd
October 2020 2/3

- At no point prior to his comments in Parliament did Minister Paul Fletcher call me and give me an opportunity to explain, the background and the correct position, even though we had a strong working relationship whereby I met with him monthly.
- The day before this incident the Minister Paul Fletcher & Prime Minister at a News Ltd conference publicly acknowledged Australia Posts strong leadership during COVID.
- 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 in my 3 year tenure had any performance issues been raised with me. Pg.41
- I was being hung. For rewarding 4 outstanding executives for delivery of a landmark agreement, which saved many Post Offices. An agreement their colleague, Josh Frydenberg played a strong role in.
- Straight after the incident my husband organised and paid personally for a car to collect me and drive back to my Sydney home. S Davies EGM P&C 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 T Nutt numerous times and he suggested that I prepare a brief statement that I would take annual leave and support an investigation. 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.
- **5.14pm** to T Nutt. First email. "I have done no wrong. I welcome the 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"
- **5.49pm** 2nd email draft to T Nutt. "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"
- **6.03pm** 3rd email draft to T Nutt. "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"
- **6.35pm** 4th email draft to T Nutt "Are you ok for me to say this".. "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 T Nutt and I.
- **Communication directly with the Chair consisted of two emails.** First **5.35pm** (on recommendation of T Nutt) "I would like to take two weeks annual leave immediately to enable you to undertake an investigation. Please let me know if you will approve. Christine"

12/4/21

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Thursday 22nd
October 2020 3/3

- **7.04pm** Second Communication with Chair. I forwarded to the Chair a copy of an email someone had written to Ministers Paul Fletcher & Senator Corman questioning their decision to investigate me. **Pg41.**
- 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 T Nutt.
- I received messages from concerned supporters of mine stating they believed the Prime Minister was probably not briefed and to remain calm. **Pg.42**
- **7-7.30pm** I arrived home between. I agreed with my husband I would not make a statement that evening. **Pg.42.**
- At no time did the Chair speak to me that afternoon or evening regarding the matter.
- It later became Apparent that at approx. 7pm that evening the Chair made a media statement stating the CEO would “stand aside” while an investigation took place **See Appendix 10. pg. 89-90 I was not consulted or informed by AP prior to the statement being made.**
- **8.22pm** The Chair wrote an “all employee message” stating Minister P Fletcher announced a formal investigation into the gifts. It noted the CEO would stand aside whilst the investigation took place. **See Appendix 11.Pg 92-93**
- The employee email is evidence that the brief of the investigation had changed. It was no longer into the governance of the Board, it was now about “gifting of watches”. They were not gifts. They were rewards. The messaging implied that I had done something wrong. **Pg.42.**
- In the afternoon. Ministers Fletcher & Senator Cormann put out a joint statement stating they were surprised to learn about the gifts and that they were surprised to learn about the gifts and that they had instructed the departments to conduct a formal investigation. 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 FBT had been paid and that they had properly been accounted for. Minister Fletcher’s office was aware of all these facts.
- John Stanhope (previous Chair) called me on the way back from Canberra. He said a journalist from the AFR called and he said he didn’t know what they were talking about and simply answered, I do not know anything about it. Mr Stanhope and I spoke about the watches and Bank@Post and I advised John Stanhope about the photograph of the card we both signed. The next day he was quoted AFR that he does remember, although he was not sure it was watches. All of the board knew about the reward and approved and he thinks he popped his head into a morning tea, but it is not in his diary for that day.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Friday 23rd October
2020

- **8.01am** . I called the Chair. He state 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. **Pg. 43**
- 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 now inundated with media and television reporters. Several turning up at my home, calling my mobile etc. I shared this 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 I 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 Acting CEO sends an all Australia Post 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 began to feel the investigation was not one into governance, but one to justify the attack on me. **Pg.43.**
- Later in the day, 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 time did the organisation put out any release giving clarity on why the gifts were awarded or any background into the Bank@Post opportunity. **Page.43.**
- Other than T Nutt, to whom I am grateful for his support, no board member or the Chair contacted me on that day. **Pg.44.**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Saturday 24th October
2020

- T Nutt called early in the morning to check in on me. He told me to remain calm and to not do anything hastily.
- Sue Davies organized for me to have EAP assistance as I was highly stressed and in a deep state of shock.
- 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 any way, yet they were fully aware of the extent of the degrading reporting. **Pg.44.**
- 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. Pgs.109-154**
- The Chair did not contact me that day and I did not receive any letter from the organization. **Pg.45**

Sunday 25th October
2020

- Sue Davies sent me the letter from Australia Post. **Pg.45**
- 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.
- **1.10pm** I messaged him 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."

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Monday 26th October
2020

- **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” **Pg.45**
- I read the Australia Post letter sent to me. It was headed “**Your Agreement to stand aside pending investigation**”. See **Appendix 12 Pg. 94-96.**
- 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. **Pg.45**
- 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. I believe the Board met that day and were aware of my health concerns.
- 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. **Pg46.**
- 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.
- **7.41pm** The Chair 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.” **Pg.46.** My doctor strongly recommended I do not respond.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Tuesday 27th October 2020

- **7.22am** I wrote to Australia Post 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”
- **7.35am** I wrote again, 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.
- **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.
- **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. Pg.97-99.**
- The LPO’s continued to campaign on my behalf. Click on this to see Sky News. https://www.skynews.com.au/details/_6204899463001
- 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 2020

- **7.22am** 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. Pg. 100-102**
- My 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 raised received no response. **Pg. 47.**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Thursday 29th October
2020

- **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. Pg.103**
- A journalist stated Australia Post had confirmed I had verbally agreed to stand aside with the Chair. Australia Post were aware that this sceptical claim did not have legal standing and they required my written approval. **Pg.47**
- 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 Pg.104-108** 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. **Pg.48**
- 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. **Pg.48**
- 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. **P48.**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Saturday 31st October
& Sunday 1 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. **Pg.48**
- 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 CEOs of the banks with whom I had signed the Bank@Post contract with. **Pg.48**
- 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. **Pg.48.**
- Reflect on Gottlieb's recommendation & all advice received

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- **10.46am** I sent the letter to the Chair and the Board, 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. Pg. 63-66**
- 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.
- I sent the letter sitting in Max Kimber's Chambers with him, my lawyer Bryan Belling, Ross Thornton and Taeressa Fawthrop.
- **10.52am** I messaged Australia Post Director Tony Nutt at and informed him that I had sent the letter, 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.
- **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.
- **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.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Monday 2nd November
2020

- 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. Pg. 67-68.**
- 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. Pg. 69-70.**
- 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. **Pg.21.**
- 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.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

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.
- **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".
- **12.33pm** I tried calling back and texted : "Paul, apologies I missed your call. I have tried calling back. Let me know when would suit you to speak. Christine"
- **3.42pm** Minister Fletcher texted back: "How's 6pm today to speak"
- **5.21pm** I replied "Yes"
- **6.00pm** The Minister called. 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. **Pg.22.**

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.
- **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.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Thursday 5th November 2020

- Returned response in morning to the Chairman, copying General Counsel and the EGM of P&C and others.
- Spoke to Sue Davies and expressed my sincere disappointment that Australia Post would not approve sending my employee note out.
- **1pm** my Email access is withdrawn.
- Approx. **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

- **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

- Received a phone call from John Cox leaving a message that Rodney Boys had instructed him not to provide me with any info and all requests should go via 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.
- Media commenced asking questions about what really happened ? #Ronni Salt

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Monday 9th November 2020

- AP attends Senate Estimates. Chair misled the Senate in regard to the BCG Report, the CEO Standing aside and the Chair & Board Approval of the letter to the Ministers seeking help on 31/3/20. Refer Section D. **Page, 24, 34, 35**
- 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.
- As it relates to BCG the chronology of evidence **Pg.35-37**
- As it relates to CEO agreeing to Stand down. No evidence has been ever provided to substantiate this, even though the lawyers representing me have requested several times. **Pg.37-49**
- Raised my concerns regarding the Chairs evidence with Maddox. **Pg.34**
- Australia Post admitted they had not signed any agreement with MS Holgate. MS Holgate had been given no release.

Tuesday 10th November 2020

- Receive letter via email from Australia Post asking me to sign & committing that I will not make any claim on them or ask for my notice period. I did not sign **Pg.24. & Pg.29 ref 8/12.**
- My lawyer sent several briefing papers to Maddocks ahead of my scheduled interview. Notes incl. concerns regarding evidence given at Senate and the events on the 2/11 when I offered to resign but terms not accepted and I had no agreement with the board. **Pg.24.**

Wednesday 11-20 November 2020

- Involved in the Maddocks Investigation refer Section H. **Page 54.**
- Raised my concerns regarding the Chairs evidence again when being interviewed. **Pg.34** They chose to exclude this from their report.

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

**Saturday 21st
November 2020**

- **5.02pm** Messaged Minister S. Birmingham & asked for help. **Pg. 25.**
- “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**

- **10.27am** message received from Minister S Birmingham “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 “Thank you , I would really appreciate it. Can I send an email to you. Christine”
- **12.21pm** Minister S Birmingham replied “sure with email address” **pg. 25**

**Monday 23rd November
2020**

- **3.11pm** I wrote to Minister S Birmingham which included the concerns around the Chairs evidence **Page 25 See Appendix 5 pg. 71-74.**
- **4.06pm** I text Minister S Birmingham and said “Simon, I have sent a confidential email to that address. Thank you Christine” **pg. 26.**

**Tuesday 24th November
2020**

- **10.40am** I message Minister S Birmingham and say “Simon, apologies do you have a time we could talk. M. P Fletcher is apparently quoted on the investigation today in the media and I am being inundated with requests. My strong preference is to talk with you. Christine”
- Later in day, became concerned as I had not heard back from Minister S Birmingham. I was due to co-chair the Ministerial Advisory Council (MAC) of Trade the next day. I called Minister Simon Birmingham Mobile.
- **6.10pm** Minister S Birmingham responded & Text me “sorry Christine I am on other calls at present. I will aim to give you a call about 9am your time tomorrow”
- I responded “thank you very much” **pg. 26.**

**Wednesday 25th
November 2020**

- **9am** Minister. S Birmingham calls at 9am as committed and we spoke for ~45 mins. We discussed 3 items:
- Co-Chair the MAC in afternoon. He confirmed he did.
- Sought his advice regarding misleading evidence given at senate by Chair. He suggested sending to Chair and Board of AP & ask them to address their evidence and give me an apology. He reminded me this was your decision to make not his;
- Would he meet with me to help get a resolution with AP as it was causing great anxiety. He suggested I forward to Minister P Fletcher the email I had written to him on 23/11 and that he would speak to Minister P Fletcher and organise for the 3 to meet to get resolution.
- **10.15am** I wrote to Minister. Paul Fletcher and forward to him my email to Minister Simon Birmingham & explained “Minister Simon Birmingham agreed to speak to you this week to see if the 3 of us could meet ... **pg. 71-74 See Appendix 5**
- **No Response received from Minister. P Fletcher.**
- I co-chaired the Ministerial Advisory Council for Trade with Minister. Andrew Gee. As Minister. Birmingham got delayed. **pg.27**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

**Wednesday 2nd
December 2020**

- **B Belling** wrote to Minister Birmingham & Minister Fletcher. Letter referred to the draft Maddocks report. Requesting statement from the Shareholder Ministers to be published no later than close of Monday 14 December. **Pg.27**
- There was no response to this letter.
- **1.06pm** I wrote to the Chair & Board AP raising concerns regarding the misleading evidence given to the senate on 9/11 and asked the Board to take appropriate action. Also stating I did not sign any variation to my contract nor a deed of release. Despite this recruitment for a replacement for my role is actively underway. **Pg. 28. See Appendix 6. pg. 75-82.**

**Thursday 3rd December
2020**

- **3.59pm** B Belling received a response to my letter 2/12. AP Lawyers (Allens) did not copy even though they are aware at this time that B Belling had left Kinston Reid, although continuing to support me. **See Appendix 7 Pg.83-84**
- "1st issue, concern about the accuracy of certain evidence given by the Chairman and other reps of AP during their appearance at the senate estimates 9/11. AP intends to follow its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for the hearing and communicating any clarification to the committee. It will consider matters raised by me in due course" **See Appendix 7. Pg.83-84**

Friday 4th December 2020

- I received the letter sent to B Belling a day later. **Pg.28 see Appendix 7 Pg.83-84.**
- AP advising my request for misleading information to be addressed would be done so through the usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript. **Pg. 28**
- With regard to the request to seek closure on contract they wrote : "there is no doubt that Ms Holgate's employment came to an end on 2/11 by reason of her resignation" **Pg.28**

**Saturday 5th December
2020**

- **8.18am** I message Minister S 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 I help. Christine" **Pg.29**
- There was no response
- I realised that the matter was now being blanked out. Active recruitment and candidates being discussed.
- I was not seeing financial compensation at all from AP, I wanted the respect to move forward. **Pg.29.**

**Tuesday 8th December
2020**

- B Belling wrote to Simon Dewberry from Allens representing AP. He acknowledge letter sent on the 4/12 and reminded Allens it is 4 weeks since AP gave misleading evidence at the Senate & Parliament remained misled. He also sought closure on my contract. **Pg. 29.** "Ms Holgate's employment was rendered untenable by the actions (and indeed, the inactions) of the Chairman of AP.
- *The employment relationship, but not the employment contract, may have ended.* **Pg.29.**
- AP admitted on 9/11 when giving evidence at Senate Estimates, that it had not signed any agreement with Ms Holgate. Ms Holgate had not given any release. **Pg.29**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Wednesday 9th
December 2020

- Evening of 9/12 B Belling received email from Allens on behalf of Australia Post. Not copying me again as requested. B Belling did not see the email until Friday the 11/12 & forwarded it to me at 5.20pm. They were also aware that B Belling has having complications with his internet and may not have seen the email. -
- 2 attachments (45 pgs. in 6 font)
- AP wanted to make lists of corporate credit card costs over my 3-year tenure public they wanted my approval. But I would have had the opportunity to provide explanation or comments.
- I read the list and was deeply concerned it was misleading how the costs were being presented.
- The document implied all costs in the office of the CEO were mine personally. They were not. I had never seen the expense before and they were managed by both my Assistant and the CFO, now Acting CEO.
- Again, as with Hansard weeks earlier, they had put a lock on the document so no explanatory comments could be complete. I was also expected to meet an unreasonable time frame, which they had clearly sat on for weeks before their request to me. I objected. **Pg.29-30**
- Pls Note: September 2020, V Ballantyne and I worked tirelessly to be able to give a detailed breakdown of my expenses for the previous year. This was shared with the Chair, Tony Nutt and General Counsel. Always have been open to review of my expenses; I have asked though they fairly reflect the owner e.g. under the office of the CEO included lunches for board meetings were classified as CEO lunch. Giving the appearance I was having lavish Lunches.

Thursday 10th
December 2020

Friday 11th December
2020

Monday 14th December
2020

- I reached out to V Ballantyne and asked for help.
- I had 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 cu-off date. He said if you needed further details re this that Nick is best to speak to"
- As Nick refused to speak with me and I was told I had to address all question to him via their lawyers. **Pg.30**
- It was very clear securing any reasonable help was not going to be forthcoming.

Tuesday 15th December
2020

- 3.28pm I wrote to a lawyer at AP and asked why costs had been changed and coded as if they were my expenses ?
- I offer to speak the next day.
- I hear **nothing** back. **Pg.30**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Wednesday 16th December 2020

- I write to the lawyer at AP again and ask for V Ballantyne to have access to the file if they would not allow me access. No response.
- **7.38pm** Bryan Belling receives the first of 3 letters Allens advised they would send me regarding me. Again, I am not copied.
- The first of the 3 letters states:
- "Senate Estimates" ..I refer to my letter dates 3/12 to confirm AP is following its usual process of reviewing the Hansard transcript for Senate Estimates hearing on 9/11 and AP will consider the matters raised by C Holgate.
- "Post-Employment restraints... AP does not agree with assertion that the pos-employment restraints that apply to Ms Holgate are unenforceable in the absence of a payment to her."
- Refer October 23rd, day following 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 media on it.
- This confirms AP was attempting to hold me to all restraints with no payment, which would in effect mean I would not be about to work without pay, even though they had no signed agreement with me. This is grossly unreasonable.
- **7.46pm** 2nd letter sent to B Belling. This letter was an offer to release me after 2/5 (i.e. 6 mths) if in return I agreed no financial compensation at all and it "releases the AP companies and their officers and employees from all legal claims relating to her employment & termination of her employment". Offer valid until 24/12.
- I did not agree. The Chair did not contact me. This was incredibly insulting. **Pg.31.**

Thursday 17th December 2020

- 8.07am I received the 3rd letter which is in relation to the credit card expenses request. AP did 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 17/12 2020 to make any submissions that the summaries are exempt from access under the FOI Act"
- 45 pgs. Majority 6 font. Most expenses are not mine. Given extremely unreasonable short time to address with virtually no access to any resources.
- I spoke with B Belling, he wrote to Allens "the over-arching point being the records as those now present are misleading in material respects..." I remained prepared to go through material line by line, to facilitate the explanation process I attempted to undertake as understood by liaison with Mr Mackenzie at Post. **Pg. 31**
- I write to S Davies, N MacDonald, copying A Staines and T Nutt (advised both had been appointed to lead the "Christine" matter.
- "I write seeking your urgent support" The letter asking for help to complete the exercise properly and provide access to some of the data and to be reasonable to be able to add comments. I re-iterate my strong desire to help. **Pg. 32**

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Friday 18th December 2020

- **4.58pm** Australia Post wrote to B 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 CEO C Holgate and (b) the credit card held in the name of the "office of CEO" for the period 1/10- 31/8 (the disclosed information) **Pg.32**
- Later finding out that I had a right to this, but AP appeared to have been deliberately misleading me. **Pg.32**

Saturday 19th December 2020

- B Belling forwards the letter to me received on 18/12 There was no deadline of when this was required to be completed, this was now the week prior to Christmas Holidays.
- Over the coming weeks I became increasingly disappointed by AP actions towards me, regularly send 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. **Pg.32**

Sunday 20th December 2020

Monday 21st December 2020

- AP addressed their inaccuracies in a letter to the Chair of the Senate Committee. This letter is available publicly. **See Appendix 8. Pg.85-87**
- This fails to address the considerable inaccuracies raised with the Chair and the Board, the Shareholder Ministers and Maddocks who led the investigation for the Govt.
- Maddocks report into Governance issues at AP fails to acknowledge at all any of the significant concerns I raised with them and the shareholder ministers.

Tuesday 22nd December 2020

CHRISTINE HOLGATE 2020-2021 Chronology

Wednesday 23th
December 2020

- **4.58pm** Australia Post wrote to B 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 CEO C Holgate and (b) the credit card held in the name of the "office of CEO" for the period 1/10- 31/8 (the disclosed information) **Pg.32**
- Later finding out that I had a right to this, but AP appeared to have been deliberately misleading me. **Pg.32**

Thursday 24th December
2020

- B Belling forwards the letter to me received on 18/12 There was no deadline of when this was required to be completed, this was now the week prior to Christmas Holidays.
- Over the coming weeks I became increasingly disappointed by AP actions towards me, regularly send 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. **Pg.32**

Friday 25th December 2020

- Christmas Holidays

Saturday 26th December
2020

Sunday 27th December
2020

CHRISTINE HOLGATE

2020-2021 Chronology

Thursday 7th January 2021

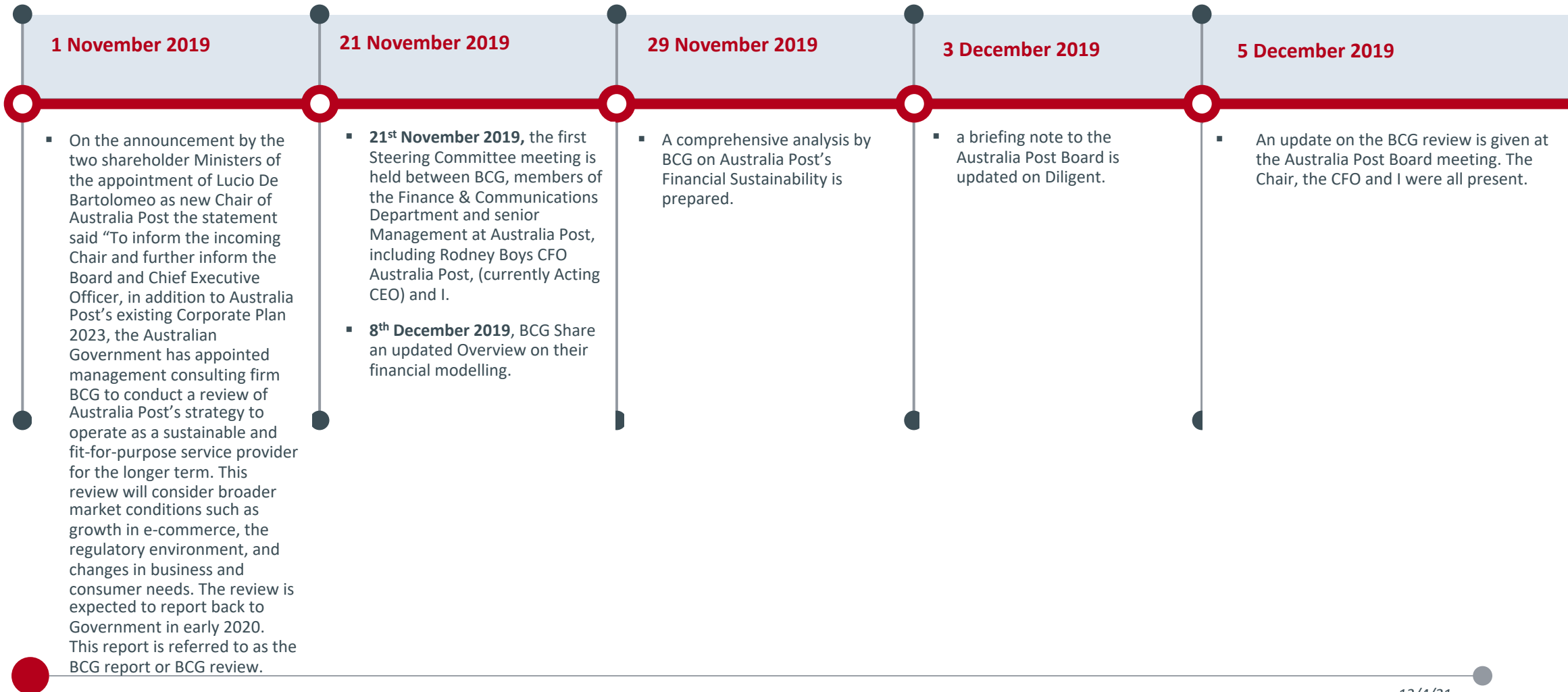
Friday 8th January 2021

Saturday 9th January 2021

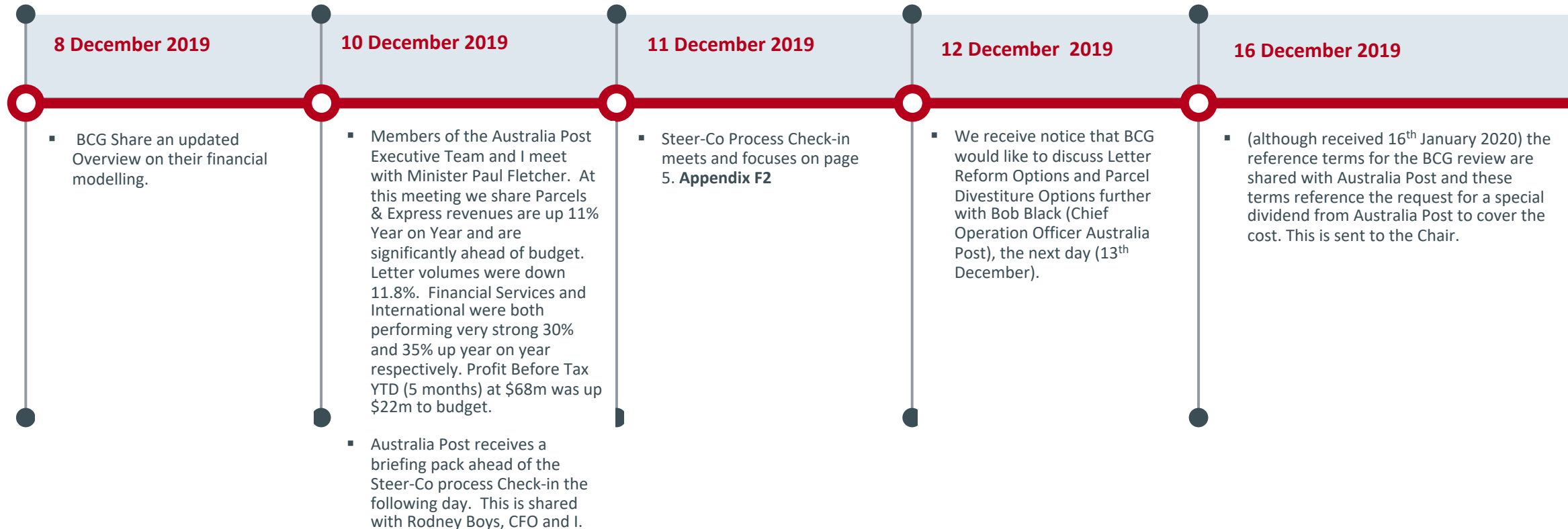
Sunday 10th January 2021

- T Nutt and I had an extensive call lasting for more than 3 hours. He had approval from the Board to call me. He agreed to speak with me after I shared with S Davies how grossly unfair I felt Australia Post had treated me. Offered to do the right thing, but AP 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, made no serious attempt to resolve my release from the organisation among other issues. I complained of the unreasonable deadlines.
- Over the coming weeks T Nutt supported me to securing more reasonable deadlines to some of the onerous tasks AP kept asking of me. Even though I was not employed there. **Pg.32**
- No resolution to my contract has ever been made, despite all the requests I made to the Board and Government to help to do so.
- I have never signed a deed of release.
- I have been treated very unfairly, victimised and my reputation and career “thrown under the bus” without justification to save the reputations and careers of others... **Pg.33**

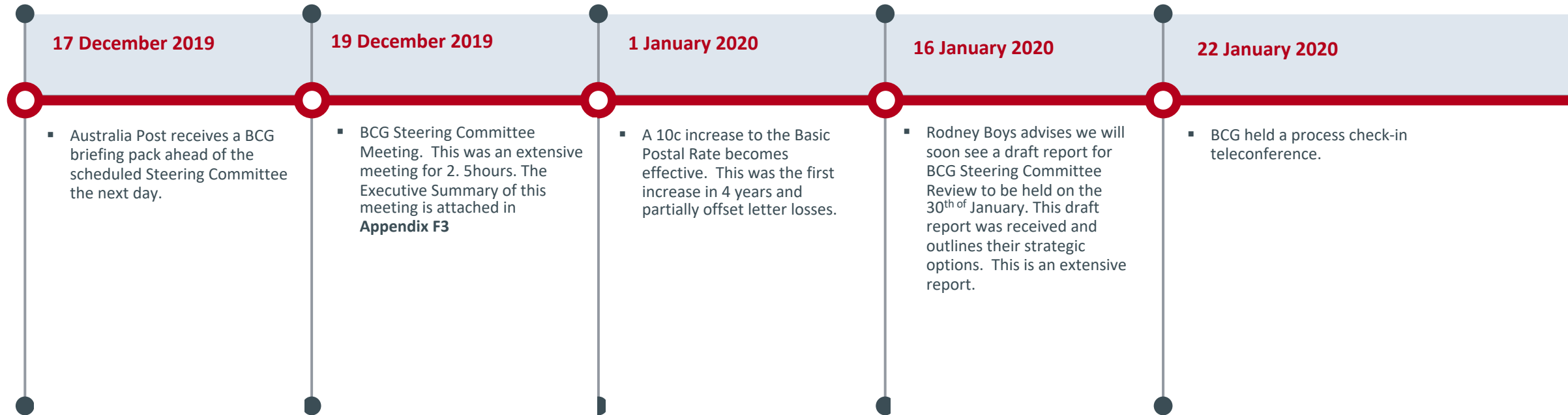
Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



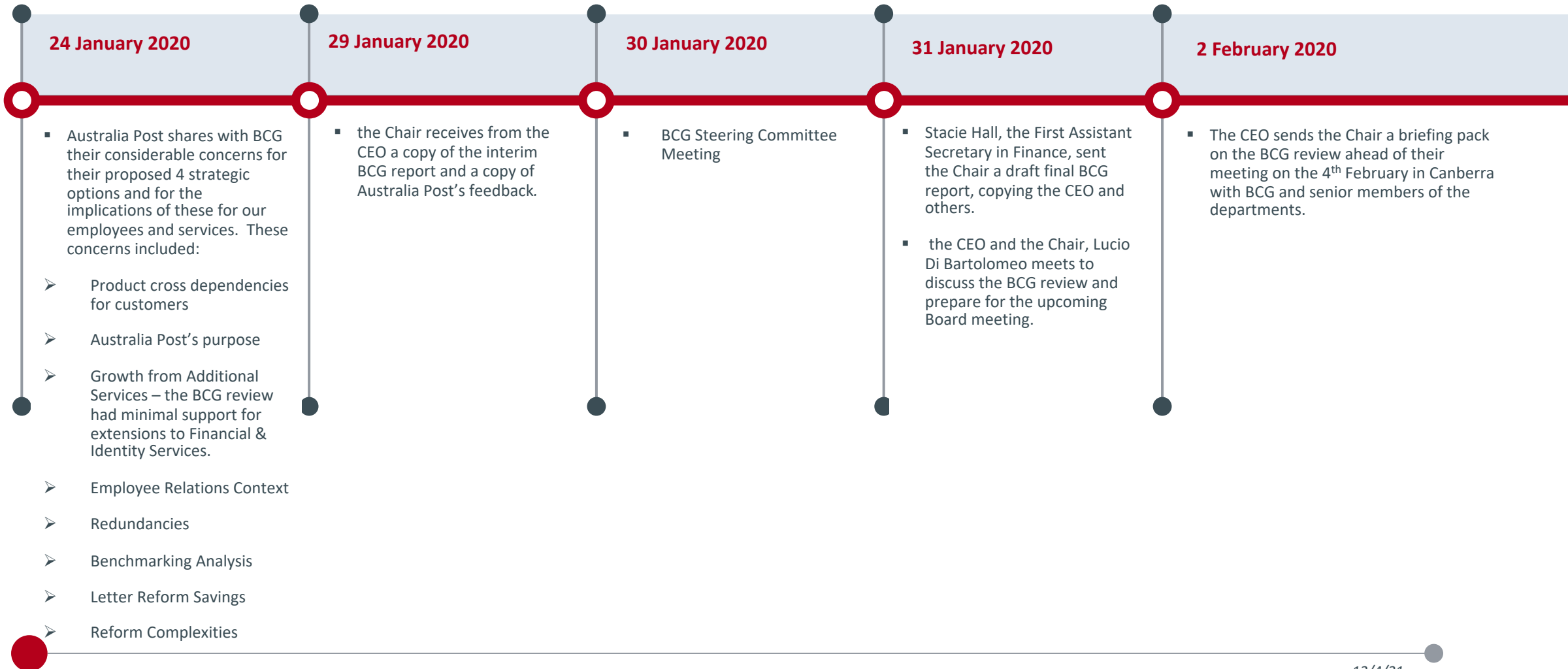
Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



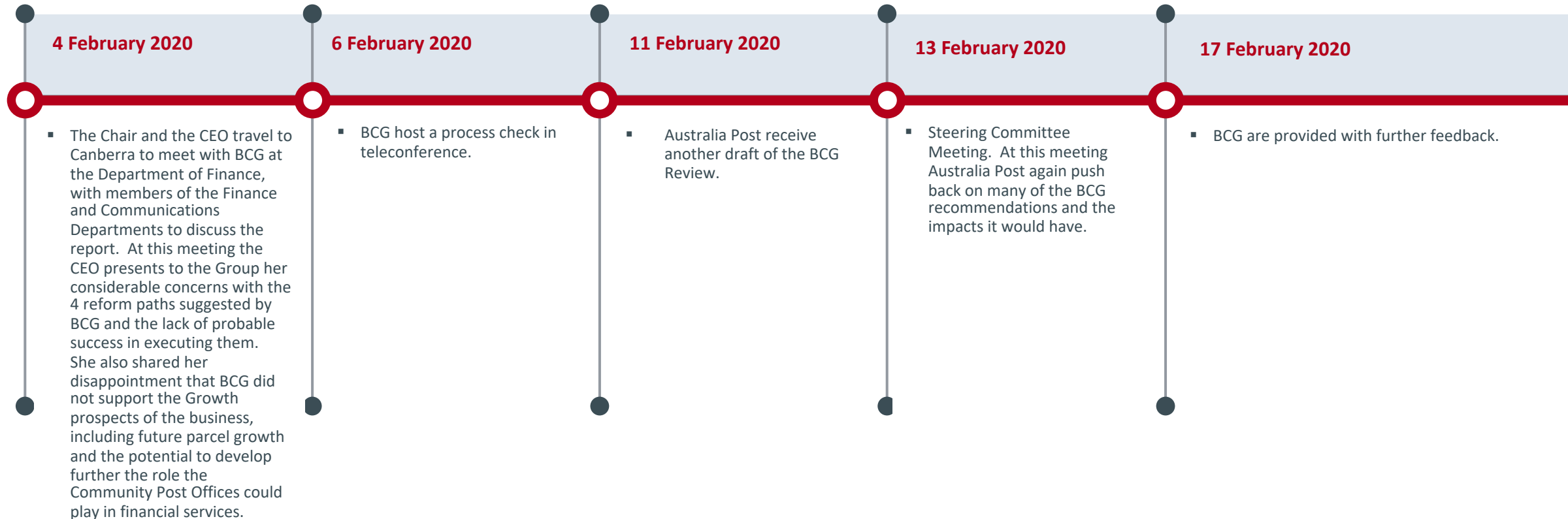
Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



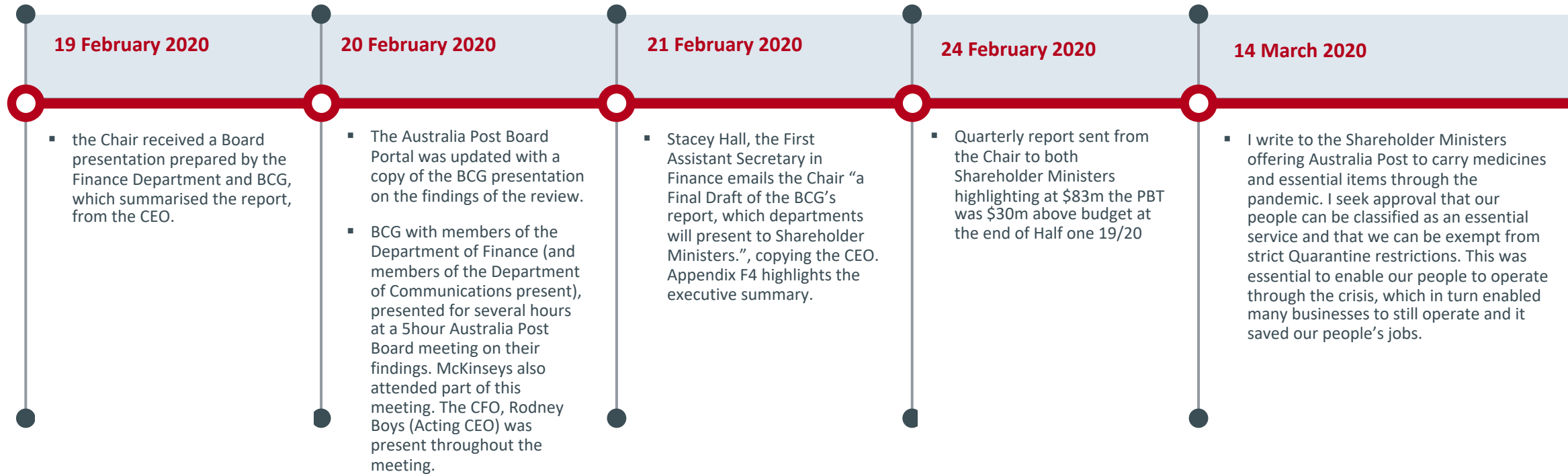
Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline

27 March 2020

- Royal Mail UK announce that they expect to make a material loss and suspend any guidance. We were in regular contact with the major postal partners to Australia Post and none of these were expecting to remain profitable.

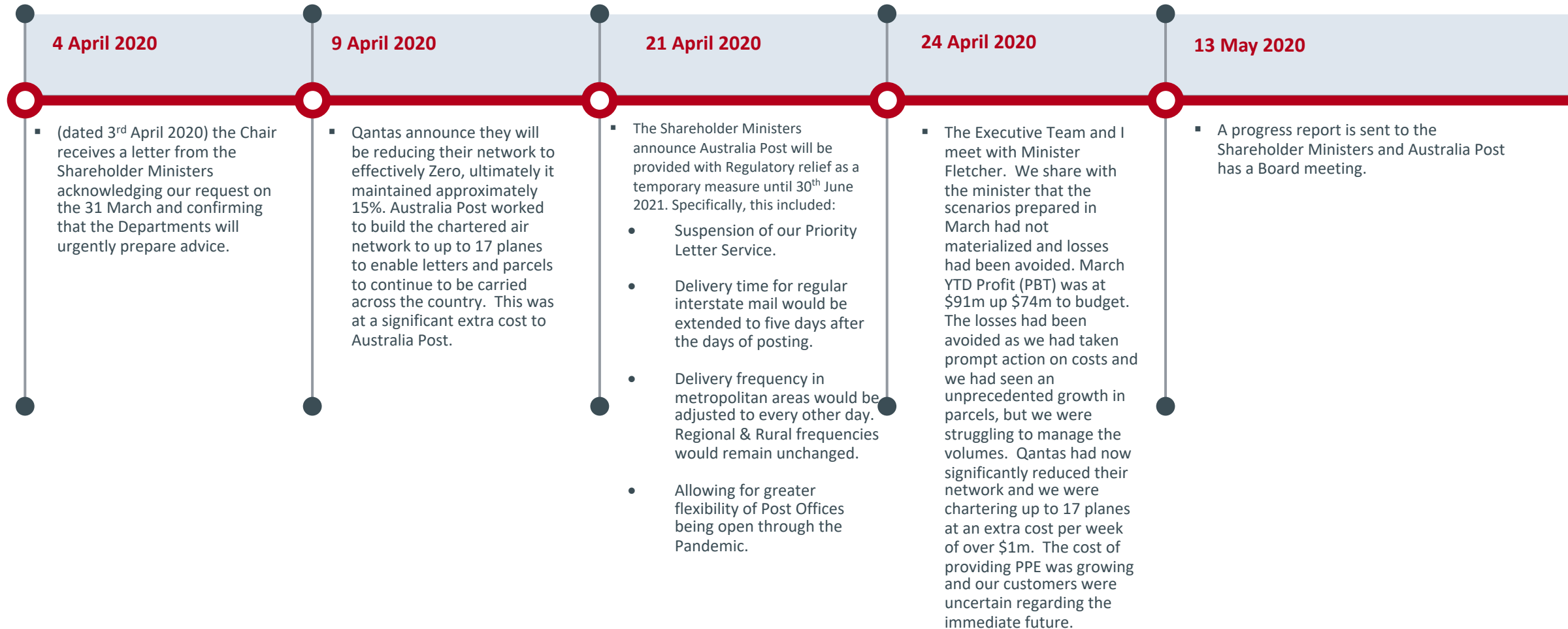
30 March 2020

- There was a Board call to discuss and review the draft letter to the Ministers. Parcel volumes started to shift and we started to see an increase in extra large parcels, these are items which could not be carried by Posties on motorbikes.
- Australia Post receives a letter from both Shareholder Ministers. It acknowledges the Chair's letter on the 24th February. It encourages further cost savings consistent with those on the BCG review. It requests clarity on whether Australia Post is going to pay a special dividend of \$1.32m to cover the cost of the BCG review. It states:
- "We thank you for your assistance during the Review and look forward to continuing to work closely with the Board and Australia Post as you manage the effects of COVID-19 on your workforce, your customers and the business, and through the upcoming Corporate Plan process. An initial step, we envisage that BCG's findings should be taken into account as the Corporate Plan Process is developed as we work together to support Australia Post's ambition for transformation"

31 March 2020

- I write to shareholder ministers seeking assistance to be able to manage through the crisis. This included regulatory relief for delivery times and stopping priority mail as we could not meet the times stipulated with a significantly reduced air network.
- 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.

Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline



Chronology of Evidence regarding BCG: 2019 - 2021 Timeline

