

**Questions on Notice for Christine Holgate
Australia Post Inquiry 13th April 2021**

QON001

Senator Kitching: *“Can I go to the Maddocks investigation? Who first directly informed you that that would be occurring?”*

Answer:

On page 92, in my main submission, is a copy of a letter (by email) to all Australia Post employees from the Australia Post Chairman Lucio Di Bartolomeo. This letter was sent on the evening of October 22nd 2020. In the letter it states that there will be an investigation and I will stand aside whilst the investigation is undertaken. I was not consulted on the letter prior to it being sent. This was the first notice that I was given that I would be investigated.

On page 95, in my main submission, to the inquiry is a copy of the letter from the Australia Post Chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo, to myself, dated the 24th October 2020 and sent to me via my husband’s email on the 25th October 2020. In this letter it states there will be an independent investigation. This was the first formal notice to myself personally.

On page 106 in my main submission to the inquiry is a copy of a letter from the Australia Post Chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo, dated the 29th October 2020. In that letter the Chairman provides a copy of the terms of reference for the investigation.

On November 4th I received the letter that follows below. This letter formally informs me that I will be invited to be interviewed.

Page 54-56 in my main submission specifically covers the Maddocks investigation.

From: "Macdonald, Nick"

Date: Wednesday, 4 November 2020 at 8:48 pm

To: Christine Holgate

Cc: Kristian Imbesi

Subject: Confidential - Shareholder Departments' Investigation - Letter from the Chair

Hi Christine

Please find attached a letter from the Chair, regarding the Shareholder Departments' Investigation. I have also attached a copy of the Director's Access, Indemnity & Insurance Deed (referred to in the letter, regarding access to Board papers).

Since this letter was prepared, we have been advised that the investigators, Maddocks, do wish to meet with you. We expect that they will be in touch with you shortly.

Please let me or Kristian know if we can assist with access to Board papers.

Kind regards

Nick

Nick Macdonald

General Counsel & Corporate Secretary

Australia Post

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4 November 2020

Ms Christine Holgate

BY EMAIL:

Dear Christine

Shareholder Departments' investigation into Australia Post

As you know, the Shareholder Departments have been instructed by Shareholder Ministers to conduct a formal 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 personal expenses of executives.

A copy of the Government's Terms of Reference for the investigation is enclosed and these can also be located on the Department website:

<https://www.communications.gov.au/documents/shareholder-departments-investigation-australia-post-terms-reference>

Maddocks is the law firm that has been appointed by the Shareholder Departments to support the investigation.

Interviews

Maddocks has informed us that they may wish to speak with you as part of the investigation. We understand that they are making arrangements with you directly for this purpose.

Access to documents

Maddocks has also requested that Australia Post provide documents and emails that may be relevant to the investigation.

As part of our response, we are undertaking searches of emails stored on Australia Post's IT systems to identify and access relevant correspondence or information. These searches will be undertaken in accordance with the Group Technology Policy and are limited to identifying relevant information that may need to be produced to Maddocks.

As a matter of courtesy, we want to let you know that these searches may include searches (and production) of your former Australia Post emails for information connected with the investigation.

Postal Address:
GPO Box 1777
Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone:

Street Address:
111 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Email:

Access to Board Papers

As a former director, you are entitled to access to Australia Post Board papers under a Director's Access, Indemnity and Insurance Deed.

Should you wish to access Board papers, please contact Australia Post's General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Nick Macdonald or

If you have any queries, please let me or Nick know, noting that queries regarding the investigation will need to be addressed by the investigators.

Your sincerely

Lucio Di Bartolomeo
Chair
Australia Post

Encls. Terms of Reference

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QON002

Senator Kitching: Was the version of the Maddocks report largely the same or not the same?

Answer:

Please see pages 54-56 of my main submission in which I give significant detail on the process, our feedback to Maddocks on the draft pages we read and our thoughts on the findings regarding this investigation.

The purpose of the investigation appeared to have changed, to that expressed by the Prime Minister. The report is unclear who was interviewed and who wasn't, including who on the Executive Team and whether the previous Chair was interviewed etc. The Chair of Australia Post is on public record saying he joined us at the meeting when we gave the watches, albeit not for a long period; yet the investigation does not include this. The investigation report excludes considerable evidence provided by me on governance issues. The investigation makes almost no comparison to previous spending in the organization prior to me joining, or in any other major GBE e.g. NBN, although the draft was very clear that those interviewed had reported I had managed costs tightly. The corporate costs were more than halved under my leadership, executive pay was significantly cut as was corporate spending.

I personally was given very limited opportunity to review the findings of the draft report. Pages from the draft report was sent to my lawyer Mr Bryan Belling. These pages could not be printed or forwarded to me and I had to travel to meet Bryan to read them and had a matter of hours to read them and make comments. Only those pages which referred to me specifically was sent to us to read. Pages which did not include myself were not included and I therefore cannot comment on those.

Specifically in relation to differences between the draft and final copy, as we were not given the whole report, the extent of which it changed is difficult to question. But re-checking my notes the following areas are drawn to my attention:

- The draft review appeared clearer I had not done anything wrong and had acted within my authority. However, both the draft and final report are clear that there was no intentional dishonesty etc.
- In the draft report it was evident that there were concerns raised by Maddocks about the skills mix of the Board and it was clearer regarding the lack of knowledge of the act, by some specific board members. This appears to have been removed.
- With regard to any technical breach of the act, our notes suggested it was clearer that if the watches were a reward there was no technical breach, but if they were given as a gift and unapproved, they could be interpreted as a breach. They were clearly given as a reward. This was verified by the evidence of the then CFO, the comments in the thank you card by the Chair and myself as well as my own evidence.