

16/03/2021

The Parliament of Australia

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/OnlineSubmission/Submit

Re: Senate Environment and Communications Committee's inquiry -Australia Post CEO Christine Holgate.

Dear Madam/Sir,

This submission is in support of reinstating Christine Holgate as a CEO of Australia Post followed by a public apology from Australian government. Please find enclosed my comments relating to this matter.

Australia Post – our iconic, amazing 45 years old Australian owned business was managed by Christine Holgate who was responsible for close to 7,000 outlets with over 30,000 employees and revenue increase from 6.8 billion in 2017 to 7.5 billion with a profit of over \$50million. It is my understanding that Christine Holgate was forced to resign, following criticism of her decision to reward her executive employees with Cartier watches - described in details by a frenzied media attack. I feel very strongly that this inquiry, which is following a great loss of a very successful Australia Post's CEO is an insult to our freedom of company management practices. Are we really heading in the direction of certified ridiculousness such as – yes, we can send our employees on \$10,000 courses, but no, we cannot reward them with a watch... yes, we can supply them with a car, but no, we cannot give them engraved ring... yes, we can splatter on a corporate AFL Final box, but no, we can't give them gym membership. This approach is certainly not constructive.

Despite all difficulties associated with Covid -19, Australia Post under the management of Christine Holgate has been providing all of us with a reliable, transparent and very much appreciated link between businesses, families and friends. It also provided extremely valuable services to the government, which unfortunately decided to support the action of removing Ms Holgate from her position. How could it be fair and just that the previous Australian CEO, Mr Fahour was paid \$6.8m in 2017, with additional \$4m in long-term incentives over 2015-2016, while Ms Holgate received pay deal set at maximum of \$2.75m, with fixed base of \$1.37m and no long term incentives plus being forced to resign? Who is investigating this discrepancy and decision in the appointments of the previous CEO's, which costed taxpayers millions of dollars - rather than \$20,000 spent as a gift for executives who sealed \$220M business for Australia Post? Since when did we become so disproportionate, opinionated and critical? Since when did the reward become a crime? Since when our politicians, including our Prime Minister decided that an act of reward is appalling and disgraceful? Since when our Senate became so involved in matters of company management and detailed rules rewarding good performance, especially that most of our senators would have rather limited knowledge and understanding of running a billion dollars company? I am afraid that the price of senate members discussing this matter would equal cost of thousands of watches...

As a business woman, managing and operating businesses both in Australia and overseas for the past 40 years, I find the actions of parliamentarians in this particular case highly invasive, out of proportions and extremely scrutinising, so can we please get back to a common sense approach. We all realise that our Parliament is the law-making assembly where the opinions, interests and beliefs of the Australian people should be represented, being the foundation upon which our democracy is built. And yes, it is the Parliament's role to ensure that government is answerable to the governed – so please apply this rule and support reinstating of Christine Holgate as a CEO of Australia Post.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Kind Regards,

Dr Magdalena Steffens-Bartrim
/Principal Consultant/