



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Morrison's assault on Christine Holgate was NEVER about 'taxpayers' money' and Cartier watches

The chickens are coming home to roost at Australia Post. After the board and senior management revealed their cowardice and corruption by helping the Morrison government drive out Christine Holgate, the organisation is falling apart. Australia Post is haemorrhaging senior managers who are following Christine Holgate out the door, some to join her at Global Express, others just to get the hell out of there. The exodus spells bad news for the continuity of the organisation when new CEO Paul Graham takes over next month, and creates huge uncertainty, especially for the licensed post offices.

Already reeling from losing the "greatest CEO Australia Post has ever had" in Christine Holgate, under whom LPOs had enjoyed three good years out of the last 30, LPOs have now also lost the executive in charge of their division, Nicole Sheffield. Under Christine Holgate's overall leadership, Nicole Sheffield had done a brilliant job in supporting the 2,850-strong LPO network and helping to make their businesses viable. However, like the rest of the executive team, she was caught up in the operation against Christine Holgate, and in the current state of chaos and dysfunction caused by that episode, she has decided to leave.

Corrupt hypocrisy!

In their desperation to retain executives, the Australia Post board has reportedly resorted to paying some of them retention bonuses of up to \$250,000. The hypocrisy of this action is breathtaking! This is the same board that threw Christine Holgate under a bus and claimed in front of Senate hearings and the internal Maddocks lawyers' inquiry that—hand on heart—they would never have approved of her awarding \$5,000 Cartier watches to four executives if they had known about it. This is despite knowing that the watches were recognition for achieving the greatest deal in Australia Post's history, which had saved both the LPOs and banking services in hundreds of regional communities. No, for some reason, Cartier watches were completely shocking, and this board would never have approved such a misuse of "taxpayers' money". Yet now this board is happy to pay an executive \$250,000 to stay in their dysfunctional operation. The board members in question include four Liberal Party members who have been stacked on the board by the government, picking up \$100,000 each to do PM Scott Morrison's bidding: party "fixer" Tony Nutt; Michael Ronaldson; Bruce McIver; and Deidre Willmott.

The same goes for the spineless chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo. Unlike the four Liberals, Di Bartolomeo wasn't at Australia Post when Christine Holgate awarded the watches. But he had worked with her for a year and knew what a good CEO she was. It was therefore his job to defend her from the political attacks she came under from Labor Senator Kimberley Kitching and Scott Morrison, but instead he also threw her under the bus and repeatedly told Senate hearings he too would never have approved the expenditure of \$20,000 on Cartier watches. Now this Chairman is approving retention bonuses of up to \$250,000 to bribe executives to still work for him.

This also means that the politicians who grandstanded about "taxpayers' money"—Communications Minister Paul Fletcher, Finance Minister Simon Birmingham, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison—approve of Australia Post paying \$250,000 retention bonuses. And what about the sanctimonious assassins in the Labor Party—Kimberley Kitching, Michelle Rowland, and Anthony Albanese—who instigated the attack on Christine Holgate for spending \$20,000 on watches? They have been silent on the \$250,000 retention bonuses. Whereas last year \$20,000 of watches was the greatest sin of all time, for which Anthony Albanese said Christine Holgate deserved to lose her job, now \$250,000 on numerous retention bonuses isn't worth mentioning.

These \$250,000 bonuses can be added to the list of other costs caused by the railroading of Christine Holgate, which already proved the rhetoric about "taxpayers' money" to be a cynical joke. The costs incurred in outrage over \$20,000 in "taxpayers' money" include:

- \$350,000+ for a corporate headhunter to find her replacement;
- \$1-2 million to pay for the Maddocks inquiry and associated legal fees;
- Multiple millions of dollars to pay for the Senate inquiry, its three hearings, and the associated legal costs; and
- \$1.1 million to pay out Christine Holgate's contract and her legal costs, and unknown amounts

for Australia Post's legal costs.

Australia Post cover-up

Meanwhile Australia Post has turned down a Freedom of Information request from the Citizens Party for the terms of CBA and NAB's 10-year renewal of their Bank@Post deals, specifically the amount of money they had agreed to pay as an annual Community Representation Fee (CRF). Australia Post's excuse was that this was a commercial deal, and its commercial activities are exempt from FOI. According to reliable sources, Australia Post and the banks are hiding the figure because it is \$10 million, half of the \$20 million per year Christine Holgate had made them pay.

The fact is Christine Holgate was driven out of Australia Post because she saved it from banks and privatisers; now the banks have the upper hand and have used it to squeeze Australia Post to accept a lower payment for Bank@Post, even though the banks are closing branches at a record rate and creating more work for post offices. The only way to break the power of the banks and secure the long-term viability of Australia Post and its LPOs is by establishing a Commonwealth Postal Savings Bank, for which the Citizens Party has drafted legislation to introduce into Parliament.

What you can do

1. Get involved in the campaign for a postal bank by signing the petition (below) and forwarding [the draft resolution](#) to your local councillors, asking them to pass a motion endorsing the bank.
2. Contact Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who chaired the Australia Post inquiry, and One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson, who initiated it, and ask them when they intend to follow up their report and refer Australia Post Chair Lucio Di Bartolomeo to the Privileges Committee for misleading Parliament? This is a crucial next step in cleaning out the corruption at Australia Post, and keeping pressure on the Morrison government.

Senator Sarah Hanson-Young (02) 6277 3430

Senator Pauline Hanson (07) 3221 7644

[Click here to sign the petition:](#)

[An Australia Post 'people's bank'—a win-win solution for the nation](#)