



# Australian Citizens Party

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Before Morrison can talk about bullying, he must apologise to Christine Holgate**

Politics is a nasty business, especially inside the major parties, where power trumps principles and factions war over who will wield it.

It is also supremely hypocritical, and the most supreme hypocrisy is Prime Minister Scott Morrison's shameless politicking over allegations of bullying in the Labor Party, against the late Senator Kimberley Kitching.

Morrison is desperate, staring down the barrel of an emphatic electoral defeat at the hands of Australians who've had enough of his nastiness, evidenced in his gleeful mistreatment of desperate refugees and his abuse of Christine Holgate, his slavish subservience to the banks and callous disregard for their victims, and his pathological reluctance to "hold a hose"—assist communities in crisis.

He is grasping at the Kimberley Kitching allegations to save his own political hide, but hypocrites shouldn't live in glass houses.

#### **She. Can. Go!**

The most public bullying incident in Australian political history was when Morrison publicly monstereed Christine Holgate, a non-politician, on the national stage of Parliament's Question Time.

Ironically, the ammunition he used against Holgate was provided by Kimberley Kitching, who had ambushed her a few hours earlier in Senate Estimates over Cartier watches bought in 2018—two years before the ambush.

The worst part of the ambush was that Kitching and the relevant government ministers knew the watches were associated with something that was undeniably good: the banking deal that Christine Holgate and her team of executives had landed after intense negotiations, in which three of the Big Four banks had agreed to pay an extra \$220 million for their customers being able to do their banking at post offices.

The brilliant deal was win-win-win:

- it was the biggest capital injection in Australia Post history;
- it saved banking services for 1,500 regional communities abandoned by the banks who only have post offices at which to bank; and
- it secured the financial viability of the longsuffering small business families who run community licensed post offices (LPOs), who had teetered on the edge of bankruptcy for years before Christine Holgate achieved the deal and ensured they received a significant portion of the revenue, for which they call her "[the best CEO Australia Post has ever had](#)".

The deal made Christine Holgate a political target, however.

[She upset the banks](#), which had happily exploited LPOs (and taxpayers) by underpaying for the Bank@Post service, and didn't want to pay more. The banks were also enraged that Christine Holgate was talking about Australia Post becoming a bank itself, which would break the monopoly of the Big Four over the banking system; experienced business reporter Michael West predicted in 2018 "[the banks will fight it tooth and nail](#)". During her negotiations with them in 2018, the bank CEOs would regularly call then then-Treasurer Scott Morrison to complain about her.

She upset the Australia Post board, stacked with Liberal Party hacks (led by political fixer Tony Nutt) who had wanted to scrap the Bank@Post service, which would have left 1,500 regional communities without any banking services whatsoever, and wanted to privatise Australia Post.

The success of the banking deal undermined the longstanding political plot to run Australia Post into the ground and then, as the "solution" to yet another badly run government enterprise, [privatise it](#).

Christine Holgate sealed her fate when she was the only board member to object to a 2019 Boston Consulting report that recommended partial privatisation (which likely would have been a stepping-

stone to full privatisation) and recommended against Australia Post becoming a public bank.

This was the context for Kimberley Kitching's ambush *two years later*, which forced her out.

The Communications Minister, Paul Fletcher, seized on Kitching's ambush to demand Christine Holgate stand aside, but she refused, knowing that the order to stand aside was unlawful, and that not only had she done nothing wrong, but the watches were just recognition for a great public service. By standing aside, she'd be giving credence to the dishonest political ambush and would be forced out anyway.

When Morrison was informed in Question Time that she had defied his order, he bellowed in rage: "She. Can. Go!"

For a non-politican, who had done such brilliant work as a public servant of the people of Australia, to be pilloried in this way, on the most public stage of all and by the most powerful politician in the country, was as brutal as bullying gets.

But.

For all the sanctimonious, cynical weaponising of "bullying" that we've heard this week from the PM and Kimberley Kitching's political allies, nobody in the major parties or the media saw what Morrison did to Christine Holgate that day as bullying!

The narrative was all about the gold watches, and she was Marie Antoinette—"off with her head".

They didn't care about the truth. They didn't care she was so devastated that [she fell into suicidal depression](#). *AFR's* cartoonist depicted her as a prostitute, which ABC Insiders' Talking Pictures laughed about that weekend.

Morrison didn't care he had bullied her. And, it must be said, nobody in Labor (including Kitching) cared she had been bullied; in fact, in the days before Christine Holgate offered her resignation, Labor was demanding the PM go further and fire her!

Nobody cared, until her loyal supporters among the licensed post offices, called LPO Group, spoke out in her defence, which led the Citizens Party to investigate and expose the truth, and MP Bob Katter to speak up for her. Only when the narrative changed, and the truth came out, did politicians and media start to acknowledge the sheer nastiness of what Morrison had done to her. The subsequent campaign for justice eventually led to the 2021 Senate Inquiry moved by One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson and chaired by Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, which recommended "that the Australia Post Board and Shareholder Ministers and the Prime Minister apologise to Ms Holgate for denying her the legal principles of procedural fairness and natural justice in her departure from Australia Post".

Have they apologised? No, and they never intend to! (Kitching and other ALP politicians did privately apologise, after the inquiry.)

They don't care about the damage they have caused, to Australia Post—which is so chaotic its board has approved \$500,000 retention bonuses (way more than the \$20,000 Holgate spent on Cartier watches), to stop executives from bailing out, which neither the PM nor ALP has commented on; and to licensed post offices, which now again face financial uncertainty from dysfunctional Australia Post management and from the banks, which immediately capitalised on Holgate's removal to halve their payments for the Bank@Post service.

Don't tolerate this sickening hypocrisy—a pox on both their houses. Join the fight for political change and solutions that benefit people, including a [public postal bank](#), which Christine Holgate demonstrated would be a great service to all Australian communities.

[Click here to sign the petition:](#)  
[An Australia Post 'people's bank'—with fully guaranteed savings deposits!](#)