



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Six-faced Morrison must answer for his abuse of Christine Holgate

The scandal of Scott Morrison secretly putting himself in control of the most powerful ministries in the government must lead to a new examination of his shameful attack on Christine Holgate in 2020.

[Morrison's power grab](#) included making himself the secret Finance Minister, one of the two shareholder ministers of Australia Post.

This means that when he forced Christine Holgate to stand aside as CEO of Australia Post, pending an "independent" inquiry by the Finance Department, there's no way that inquiry could be independent, because he held secret control over the department.

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, who chaired the Australia Post inquiry in 2021, tweeted on 22 August: "So when Scott Morrison attacked Christine Holgate, he was secretly one of the shareholder Ministers for Aust Post. There was already questions [sic] over his political interference with the board. Now there are serious questions about whether he misled parliament and misused his power. As the Chair of the previous Aust Post Inquiry into the treatment of Ms Holgate, I will now ask the Senate committee to reconvene. Why didn't the Prime Minister disclose he was the shareholder Minister? Did Aust Post or the Finance Dept know? Why or why not?"

Cowardice

Perceptions have changed—a lot—since 22 October 2020 when Scott Morrison used the most public national platform to brutally humiliate the Australia Post CEO over \$20,000 she'd spent on four Cartier watches two years earlier.

Most people now see it as a shameful episode of cynical bullying by a prime minister for political purposes.

But never forget, and never let them forget, that at the time virtually no politician or journalist questioned what Morrison had done, because according to their political "pub test" meter, a CEO giving out Cartier watches was "not a good look".

That goes for Anthony Albanese, who also piled on Christine Holgate, and in the week after Morrison's attack called her position "untenable", adding to the excruciating pressure that drove her to offer to resign two weeks later.

It is understood that Albanese has since apologised to Christine Holgate, but that's not the point; when it mattered, nobody in politics, the media, or the Australia Post board, stood against a public pile-on which included ABC Insiders snickering over a David Rowe *AFR* cartoon depicting her as a prostitute.

It also goes for Morrison's Cabinet colleagues, especially Josh Frydenberg, who are angry at Morrison now they have learned that all along, he was being two-faced, secretly accumulating unprecedented power.

But instead of feeling sorry for themselves, they should all reflect on their shameful cowardice in not standing against his brutal bullying, which pushed Christine Holgate to contemplate suicide, and inflicted lasting damage on Australia Post and its almost 3,000 community post offices licensees (LPOs), whose small businesses she had rescued from bankruptcy, but who once again face what they describe as "dark times".

Josh Frydenberg knew better than anyone in Parliament that day that the 2018 deal for which Christine Holgate had rewarded executives with watches had saved Australia Post, the LPOs, and banking services for 1,500 regional communities, because he had helped her land it.

Frydenberg, then new as Treasurer, had called the bank executives on Christine Holgate's behalf, and got them to agree to pay \$220 million for using Australia Post's Bank@Post service.

But two years later when it led to a political beat-up over the watches that Morrison twisted into the pretext to force Christine Holgate out, he sat silent.

Courage

Only two voices defended Christine Holgate at the time.

One was Christine Holgate herself, who refused Australia Post chairman Lucio Di Bartolomeo's direction to stand aside, knowing that she had done absolutely nothing wrong. Instead of defending his CEO, as was his responsibility, the cowardly chairman facilitated Morrison's unlawful order.

The only other voice that defended Christine Holgate belonged to the Licensed Post Office Group (LPOG), which represents the interests of the small business community post offices licensees.

[LPOG Executive Director Angela Cramp proclaimed](#) to the media that "Christine Holgate was the best CEO Australia Post has ever had".

The LPOG knew what Ms Holgate had achieved at Australia Post, because her banking deal had saved their businesses; they also knew she had made bitter political enemies because [she had opposed the plot to privatise Australia Post](#), had shelved a Boston Consulting Group report that had been commissioned to prepare Australia Post for privatisation, and was pushing for Australia Post to become a bank and take on the Big Four.

It was the LPOG's forthright defence of Christine Holgate that attracted the attention of the Citizens Party, which was already suspicious of Morrison's motives for attacking her, knowing that first and foremost he served the banks [which would be enraged at any talk of a postal bank](#).

The Citizens Party worked with the LPOG to publicise the truth about Christine Holgate, and campaign for the inquiry that would change public opinion.

The campaign was soon joined by politicians Bob Katter, Barnaby Joyce—who gave a brave speech in Parliament acknowledging he'd been wrong to condemn Christine Holgate—and Senator Pauline Hanson, who moved for the inquiry.

Reconvene the inquiry

That inquiry heard the evidence that Christine Holgate had blocked the privatisation agenda and enraged the banks, but its recommendations have not been acted upon.

Now that the Morrison scandal has renewed attention on Christine Holgate, Sarah Hanson-Young is absolutely right to reconvene the inquiry to hold Morrison to account.

She should also use the scandal to demand the Albanese government act on the existing recommendations of the inquiry, especially the recommendation to replace the Chair and current board stacked with Liberal Party hacks, with a new board that includes a representative each from the LPOs and the workforce.

Most importantly, the government should establish a public postal bank, as Christine Holgate had envisioned, which would be good for Australia Post and good for the nation.

[Click here to sign the Citizens Party's petition for a post office people's bank.](#)