



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Will Albanese retract his dishonest attack on Australia Post?

Australia Post is reeling from the extraordinary political assault on CEO Christine Holgate in October that has put its survival at risk. The small business families who run its 2,900 Licensed Post Offices (LPOs) are afraid for the future—the loss of Christine Holgate has yanked the rug from under their feet, as under her excellent management they had finally become viable after years of struggling on the edge of bankruptcy. Even the postal union is shocked that the most successful CEO Australia Post has ever had could lose her job for nothing she did wrong.

It is now known that an independent report by the law firm Maddocks [has completely exonerated Christine Holgate](#), confirming she did nothing wrong. Prime Minister Scott Morrison is trying to bury the report, but what about the Labor Party? The ALP instigated the attack on Christine Holgate, giving Morrison the pretext to force her out. Anthony Albanese personally formulated the narrative that justified the attack on Holgate, which was to create a false impression in the minds of the public that she had splurged taxpayers' money on Cartier watches for Australia Post executives in the middle of the 2020 pandemic recession. Albanese knew the watches were purchased in 2018, and had nothing to do with the hardships of 2020, but he cynically challenged Morrison about their purchase "in the middle of the worst recession in almost a century, with one million Australians unemployed, businesses collapsing and a trillion dollars of Liberal debt". It was this dishonest point-scoring by Albanese that provoked an enraged reaction from Scott Morrison which sealed Holgate's fate and smashed the hopes of the LPOs.

Now that the Maddocks Report has cleared Christine Holgate, will Anthony Albanese acknowledge his role and retract his dishonest attack on Australia Post? And will the Labor Party do its job as the Opposition and pressure Scott Morrison to release the Maddocks Report and reinstate Christine Holgate?

Exploited

Here's how Australia Post works. It is a government business enterprise which is owned by the government—i.e. "taxpayers"—but is required by law to operate commercially and *does not receive taxpayers' money*. It has 4,330 post offices, 2,520 of which are in rural and regional Australia; in many areas these are the lifeblood of their local communities, and Australia Post is mandated by law to maintain these post offices. 2,900 are LPOs, small businesses that have each invested on average \$1 million of their own money into running a post office franchise; collectively this represents around a \$3 billion *private investment* into providing an essential government service.

Does the government value these LPOs, on whose private investment it relies to meet its constitutional mandate to provide a postal service? No, it exploits them. For too long, LPOs have been expected to deliver essential government services for a Representation Allowance of until recently 83 cents an hour, now \$1.25 an hour. They need more like \$120 per day, which for the 10 hours a day that post offices are open to the public would be \$12 an hour (not counting the extra work before and after hours when the doors are shut). Before Christine Holgate took over, the government also allowed the big banks to take advantage of LPOs by aggressively shutting bank branches knowing their customers would still be able to do their banking through the post office, but without compensating LPOs for the extra costs. Effectively, LPOs have subsidised Australia's postal service and banking system out of their own pockets, leaving them permanently on the edge of bankruptcy.

The Liberals, who have been in power for 19 of the 31 years since Australia Post was corporatised, don't care that they have been running Australia Post into the ground—a bankrupt Australia Post would be their excuse to privatise it. They have long stacked the board with Liberal apparatchiks (as does Labor when it is in office) and they have looked for every opportunity to strip its services and assets. Christine Holgate's predecessor Ahmed Fahour (an NAB banker paid more than double her salary) made profits by selling assets, such as Sydney's historic General Post Office.

Christine Holgate turned around the fortunes of Australia Post. Before she took the job in 2018, she toured post offices around the world and in Australia to get a sense of what problems needed to be solved. Her inquiries showed her the future of postal services lay in combining them with the provision of financial services, as France, Switzerland and India have done. From her consultation with the LPOs

she recognised this was also the win-win solution to their financial struggles, and to the communities they served, many of which in rural and regional Australia and lower-income city suburbs had been abandoned by the banks. (Reportedly, she also engaged in discussions about Australia Post becoming a bank itself—[the ultimate win-win solution](#).)

Holgate led a team of executives who negotiated an amazing deal with the private banks, forcing three of the big four and around 70 smaller institutions to collectively pay an extra \$100 million per year to Australia Post for serving their customers. She also made sure that a significant percentage of the deal went to the LPOs, ensuring their viability for the first time, for which they call her “the best CEO Australia Post has ever had”. As the Maddocks Report reveals, Christine Holgate was authorised under Australia Post’s rules to award executives bonuses up to \$150,000 each without consulting the board; for the deal of the century with the banks, in October 2018 she awarded the four key executives a \$5,000 watch each.

Two years later Labor Senator [Kimberley Kitching ambushed Christine Holgate](#) over this deal in Senate Estimates, accusing her of improperly using taxpayers’ money, and Anthony Albanese dishonestly escalated the attack. By their actions, they share responsibility for the fate of Australia Post and its LPOs. Former Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce has acknowledged the attack on Holgate was wrong—will Anthony Albanese? Australians should demand to know.

What you can do

To support the fight to save Australia Post and create a public post office “people’s bank”, join in the campaign for the three Rs: Release the Maddocks report; Replace the board; and Reinstatement Christine Holgate as CEO.

Call and email Labor leader Anthony Albanese and Shadow Communications Minister Michelle Rowland and demand they retract their attacks on Christine Holgate and pressure Scott Morrison to release the Maddocks report:

Anthony Albanese: a.albanese.mp@aph.gov.au (02) 9564 3588
Michelle Rowland: michelle.rowland.mp@aph.gov.au (02) 9671 4780

Call and email PM Scott Morrison, Finance Minister Simon Birmingham, and Communications Minister Paul Fletcher, demanding the three Rs:

Scott Morrison: www.pm.gov.au/contact-your-pm (02) 9523 0339
Simon Birmingham: senator.birmingham@aph.gov.au (08) 8354 1644
Paul Fletcher: paul.fletcher.mp@aph.gov.au (02) 9465 3950

Call and email National Party politicians and demand they stand up for their rural and regional communities and insist Scott Morrison deliver the three Rs:

Click here for the [Nationals MPs](#)
Click here for the [Nationals Senators](#)

Click here to sign the petition: [An Australia Post ‘people’s bank’—a win-win solution for the nation](#)