



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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You are the public—tell the Senate’s Australia Post inquiry your ‘expectations’

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Communications Minister Paul Fletcher used “public expectations” as a cynical political ruse to force out Christine Holgate as CEO of Australia Post over the purchase of Cartier watches. Once the truth got out, however, that she had taken on the banks and upset longstanding privatisation plans, a public backlash boiled over against the political assault on Christine Holgate and Australia Post, which achieved the Senate inquiry moved by Pauline Hanson on 25 February. Now as the public you have the chance to tell Parliament in no uncertain terms what your “expectations” actually are—make a submission to the Senate inquiry ASAP that explains why you think the government should reinstate Christine Holgate.

[Click here for the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee’s website, which has the details for making a submission.](#)

Submissions need to be relevant to the terms of reference on the Committee’s website. While most of the terms of reference are for the specific stakeholders in Australia Post, including Christine Holgate, the licensed post offices (LPOs), and the unions, to address in their submissions, the general public also has the right to weigh in, on two issues in particular: “public expectations”; and the importance of post offices to local communities.

‘Public expectations’

The public must tell the Committee our real expectations are that Australia Post should be managed properly so it remains a public service for all Australians, and not stripped down to be sold off to private interests. Contrast the \$20,000 Holgate spent on Cartier watches, to her actual achievements in managing Australia Post since taking over in October 2017.

Holgate restored Australia Post to profitability. In 2015 Australia Post suffered its first ever loss, of \$352.1 million, and CEO Ahmed Fahour predicted that within a decade losses would amount to \$6.6 billion. This was the excuse to downsize services and sell assets, so in the next three years Australia Post made profits but only by selling property such as its former mail centre in Melbourne’s CBD for \$347.8 million and Sydney’s historic GPO for \$150 million. Where was this heading? The 1 September 2017 *Australian Financial Review* reported admirers of the outgoing Fahour said he earned his \$10.6 million payout “by turning Post around and has set the business up for a possible lucrative privatisation”.

From the beginning, Christine Holgate had a different intention to Fahour, which was to grow the business as a whole to maintain services, and not as a separate profitable parcels business and loss-making letters business. She told the 27 February 2018 *AFR* she didn’t plan on selling more property: “In the future we may need to do some ... but we would like to focus on growing the business sustainably.” She assembled a team of executives who took on the banks to get them to pay properly for post offices serving their customers, which had been costing Australia Post \$50 million per year, most of it coming from LPOs’ pockets. The deal earned \$220 million over 3-5 years, making the LPOs viable and restoring Australia Post to real profitability. Under Christine Holgate, Australia Post made the following profits without needing asset sales: \$41.1 million in 2019; \$53.6 million in 2020; and a half-year profit to December 2020 of \$160 million!

Executive remuneration halved. In 2017, the last year of Ahmed Fahour, total remuneration for senior executives was \$18.5 million. Due to the scandal over Australia Post executive pay under Fahour, the Remuneration Tribunal took over setting pay rates from the board. Senior executive remuneration fell to \$13.2 million in 2018, \$12.4 million in 2019, and \$9.1 million in 2020—Christine Holgate was paid less than half of Fahour’s salary, and she assembled and led a team that restored Australia Post to profitability and managed through the 2020 chaos on remuneration falling to less than half that paid to Fahour’s team.

Surely, by any measure, Christine Holgate’s management of Australia Post meets “public expectations”? Whereas how are public expectations satisfied by politicians ambushing and driving her out over \$20,000 spent on Cartier watches, ignoring that they were to reward executives who worked “nights, weekends and holidays” to negotiate deals with 70 banks that earned \$220 million and saved Australia Post and its LPOs? And by, as a result of that ambush, Australia Post and the

government having to spend \$350,000 (for starters) on an executive head-hunting firm to find a replacement, and an estimated \$1.5-2.5 million in total legal fees to investigate the confected scandal (which cleared Holgate anyway)?

Importance of community post offices

Community post offices are the lifeblood of many communities, providing face-to-face postal, government and banking services. When towns and suburbs lose their last bank branch and ATM, without a community post office everyone must travel to the next town or suburb to bank and do other business, and because the local milk bars and bakeries and other small businesses lose their customers the town begins to wither and die. Most community post offices, especially in rural, regional and remote Australia, are licensed post office small businesses; all 2,900 LPOs call Christine Holgate “the best CEO Australia Post has ever had” and mailed \$5 to Scott Morrison by registered post to pay for the \$20,000 cost of the Cartier watches she rewarded to executives for the banking deal that saved their businesses from bankruptcy. The LPOs serve our communities, so all Australians should support their call to reinstate Christine Holgate.

Put it in the mail!

The Citizens Party is calling on all concerned Australians to make a submission to this inquiry, in two ways:

1. Follow the [instructions on the Committee’s website](#) to upload or email your submission, to ensure you submit it in time; and then...
2. *Put it in the mail*—also mail a physical copy of your submission to Parliament to demonstrate your support for Australia Post.

A submission is simply a letter by you to the Committee giving your personal perspective on this issue. Submissions close 19 March—make yours today!

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