

Entire Australia Post board must go!



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Lead Editorial

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The nest of vipers occupying the Australia Post board who betrayed Christine Holgate. From left to right: Bruce McIver, Tony Nutt, Lucio Di Bartolomeo, Michael Ronaldson. Photos: Screenshots

Australians must not tolerate the abuse of political process whereby a CEO of a government business enterprise can do a brilliant job that saves an essential national service and the people who provide it, be universally acknowledged for her brilliance, but be torn down by petty point-scoring politicians on a technicality and bullied out of her job. That is the clear picture that has emerged from the Australia Post inquiry; the only just outcome would be the full reinstatement of Christine Holgate as CEO, which all Australians should demand. Yet whatever happens to Christine Holgate, who has now escalated legal action against the government and Australia Post, it is equally clear from the inquiry, especially the latest hearing this week, that the nest of vipers occupying the Australia Post board must be cleared out, every one of them, for the sake of the ongoing viability of our national postal service.

Like Scottish hero William Wallace in *Braveheart*, who led the fight for freedom for the people of Scotland but was betrayed to the English by treacherous Scottish nobles who enjoyed lands and titles from the English king, Christine Holgate protected Australia Post's services for the people of Australia and saved the thousands of small business families who run licensed post offices, but was betrayed by the political appointees on the Board. They decided it was more important to back up Scott "Long Shanks" Morrison's unlawful, enraged instruction "she—can—go!" than fulfil their directorial duties to support the CEO whose brilliance they all acknowledge.

The final hearing of the Senate inquiry, on 3 May, featured the real powerbroker on the Australia Post board, Liberal Party fixer Tony Nutt, a former principal advisor to Prime Minister John Howard, federal director of the Liberal Party, and a member of the so-called Star Chamber that determines ministerial staff in the Morrison government. Tony Nutt knows the central truth of this saga, which is that Christine Holgate did not agree to stand aside from Australia Post while an inquiry was conducted into the Cartier watches, but that the Chairman, Lucio Di Bartolomeo, lied when he claimed she did agree. It was the lie that proved to Christine Holgate that the Chair intended to get rid of her on behalf of Scott Morrison, and was the biggest factor in the bullying that drove her to offer her resignation on 2 November.

The reason Tony Nutt knows the Chairman lied is because *after* Di Bartolomeo claimed to the Australia Post Board meeting at 5:50 PM that Christine Holgate had agreed on a phone call with him to stand aside, Nutt received two emails from Holgate only offering to take two week's sick leave, not stand aside. He also spoke to her at 7:34 PM for 20 minutes, but neither discussed her supposed agreement to stand aside. Nutt's testimony proves he knows the Chair is lying because he was always careful to say "*the Chair advised the board that she had agreed to stand aside*". But despite covering himself

legally, Nutt avoided honestly responding to Senator Pauline Hanson's line of questioning to get him to acknowledge the Chair lied.

In a sickening display, the board members heaped praise on Christine Holgate and insisted if she hadn't resigned they would have wanted her back. Tony Nutt described her as "one of the most respected business leaders in Australia"; Chair Lucio Di Bartolomeo said she "was a very good chief executive" and he was "sad to see her go"; director Michael Ronaldson acknowledged she "drove" the 2018 banking deal, and revealed the board was "really excited" she achieved it (yet denies knowing of the watches awarded to celebrate the deal).

Their praise is true, but their tongues are forked, because when it mattered, they threw her under a bus, and are now complicit in the cover-up. Australians must demand justice: replace the entire board and reinstate Christine Holgate.

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