



10 SEP, 2020

Post boss made threat over Hanson mailout

Age, Melbourne

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EXCLUSIVE

Rob Harris

National affairs editor

Australia Post chief executive Christine Holgate threatened to call police unless the City of Melbourne delivered more than 100 Pauline Hanson's One Nation-branded stubby holders to every apartment in a locked-down North Melbourne public housing tower.

Ms Holgate's written ultimatum, issued through her senior legal counsel, came days after Senator Hanson had labelled residents of the towers "drug addicts" and "alcoholics", and at the same time that Australia Post was attempting to win One Nation's vote to ensure a temporary reduction in daily postal services was not overturned by the Senate.

The 114 parcels were intercepted by the council while it was managing the week-long Victorian government-enforced lockdown of 3000 people in nine towers.

Officials overseeing distribution of food, medical supplies and mail at Canning Street, North Melbourne, opened one parcel addressed "to the householder" of an unoccupied flat and decided against distributing the stubby holders.

Sources said the items would inflame what was already an "emotional tinder box" within the tower following Senator Hanson's comments on the Nine Network's *Today* program earlier that week.

The Queensland senator had referred to residents of the towers as "from war-torn countries" and said "probably English is their second language" and they had not

hand-written note that read: "No hard feelings."

In an email, seen by *The Age*, Australia Post's general counsel and corporate secretary Nick Macdonald said the organisation would notify "the police or other "adhered to the rules of social distancing".

The stubby holders, featuring Senator Hanson's face and emblazoned with the slogan, "I've got the guts to say what you're thinking," were accompanied with a relevant authorities" unless the 114 parcels were delivered "without further delay". "If it is correct that the parcels have not been distributed as addressed, this is of very serious concern," the email dated Saturday, July 11, reads.

"The integrity of the mail is of paramount importance and it is a fundamental principle that mail should be delivered as addressed without delay or interference,

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Pauline Hanson

Christine Holgate

The stubby holder

Photo: Sitthixay Dithavong

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subject to safety and other relevant protocols being adhered to.”

Mr Macdonald said that in the circumstances it was necessary for Australia Post to notify its customer, Senator Hanson, of the delivery delay.

The written warning, sent from Mr Macdonald to council chief executive Justin Hanney, was copied in to Ms Holgate and several senior Australia Post managers.

Australia Post sources familiar with the delivery stand-off said Ms Holgate also personally pushed for the delivery of the parcels in exchanges with the council.

Ms Holgate did not respond to the question of whether she spoke to Senator Hanson or One Nation

directly before authorising the emailed threat.

In a statement Mr Hanney said the council had responsibility for overseeing the receipt and distribution of essential supplies to

residents in the North Melbourne public housing estate. “The City of Melbourne consulted with Australia Post and also sought advice from the federal police about whether the delivery breached the Commonwealth Criminal Code,” Mr Hanney said.

He confirmed the council requested that Australia Post collect the parcels and they were not distributed.

In a statement an Australia Post spokesman said the organisation took its obligation to deliver mail

as addressed seriously and “given the unique nature of the circumstances” delivered all mail to authorised officers at the site control centre.

“Upon subsequently being made aware that the items did not reach their ultimate destination, we raised it with the City of Melbourne and engaged with the sender in good faith to resolve the matter,” the spokesman said.

In April the Morrison government granted temporary regulatory relief requested by Australia Post to allow letters to be delivered in metropolitan areas every second day, rather than every day, remove priority mail products and extend delivery time for intrastate letters to five days.



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A month later the federal opposition announced it would seek to overturn the changes in the Senate with the support of the Greens.

The disallowance motion, which is still to come to a vote, needs

support from four of the five-person crossbench to succeed.

The Age revealed in July that Ms Holgate and her executive general manager Sue Davies had flown to Brisbane to give Senator Hanson a tour of the service's Brisbane distribution centre.

Senator Hanson's spokesman, James Ashby, said yesterday that the parcels had been "dealt with" and "delivered". When asked who had requested Australia Post issue a legal threat to ensure they were delivered, he replied: "I'm unsure."

Ms Holgate has come under fire in recent weeks for attempting to convince Australia Post's board to pay out more than \$7 million in bonuses to executives despite declaring in March she and her senior colleagues would waive any right because of the pandemic-induced economic downturn.

While the board eventually rejected the about-face, Ms Holgate was paid a deferred bonus of \$277,000 from last financial year.





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From: Nick Macdonald
To: Justin Hanney
Cc: Christine Holgate
Sent: Saturday, 11 July 2020 11:03 AM
Subject: Parcels delivered to 76 Canning Street, North Melbourne

Dear Justin

It has come to Australia Post's attention that 114 parcels (**the Parcels**) addressed to 114 apartments at 76 Canning Street, North Melbourne (**the Building**) are being withheld from addressees (**the Addressees**).

Please confirm by 4pm today that the **Parcels** have been distributed to the **Addressees**. If we do not receive confirmation, we will consider what further steps are necessary to deal with this situation – including whether it is appropriate to notify the Police or other relevant authorities.

Kind regards
 Nick

Nick Macdonald
 General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
 Australia Post



Excerpts from the email



The stubby holder

Canning St public housing apartments

Photo: Penny Stephens