



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Aussies revolt against banks removing branches, ATMs and cash

To stop the banks forcing everyone to go cashless, call the Senators in your state to demand they support an urgent inquiry into regional branch closures.

The major banks' callous drive to force Australians to go cashless, in total disregard for the actual needs of their customers, is fuelling a revolt all across Australia and attracting serious media attention.

This is the opportunity to force Parliament to take on the banks about their behaviour through a Senate inquiry that properly examines the issue, including through testing the banks' claims that they are only closing branches because their customers prefer to bank online instead of face to face.

Tonight at 8:00 PM AEDT, Citizens Party research Director Robert Barwick and Digital Finance Analytics (DFA) principal Martin North will expose the banks' agenda in a live DFA YouTube discussion and Q&A: "Time for a public bank".

[Click here now to set a notification to watch live and participate in the discussion.](#)

The discussion will also update viewers on the growing revolt since last November, when Martin North co-wrote a letter with independent journalist Dale Webster to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee (RARAT), asking for an urgent inquiry into the dramatic acceleration of regional bank branch closures.

Since 30 September 2022, the banks have announced 79 regional branch closures. That's just in regional communities. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 21 January that the banks have shut 700 branches in total in three years.

The banks are ripping out ATMs even faster: Sky News reported on 23 January that the total number of ATMs has been slashed by 53 per cent in five years, and over the last eight years the banks have reduced the total number of ATMs from 31,000 to just 6,400!

Yesterday, 23 January, 2GB Radio host Ben Fordham appealed for more information on this crisis in a Facebook post:

"I'd be keen for some specific examples of where this is suddenly an issue", he wrote. "We're getting a lot of messages about ATMs. They have either disappeared or been replaced by the generic machines that charge you \$2-3 a transaction. New data shows the number of ATMs has more than halved since 2017. The banks have also shut down more than 1,600 branches. The Reserve Bank says this is due to a sharp reduction in the number of cash withdrawals. But there are still many, many people who rely on cash—particularly in regional areas. This is NOT customer service."

Ben Fordham appealed for people to share their concerns with him: [click here to make a comment](#) under his Facebook post or email ben@2gb.com and share your concern. This is very important to keep the media's attention on the issue so the government starts to realise it must act.

Banks are forcing, not following, consumers

The general media reporting of this issue is shallow at best, and often ignorant. It accepts the banks' claim that they are responding to consumers preferring to do their banking online. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, it's untrue by definition, as there wouldn't be a growing revolt if it was true—very few people would care. Instead, look at communities that are about to lose their only bank, including Carnamah in WA, Coober Pedy in SA, and Junee in NSW, where the local Councils are leading a fightback to save their towns, knowing it will massively disrupt their communities and damage their local economies. Many of these regional communities don't have reliable internet, so online banking is not a reliable option, and residents end up driving hundreds of kilometres to the next town with a bank branch.

Second, as Martin North's survey shows, even though demand for branch services is higher in the regions than in the big cities, the banks are shutting down regional branches faster than in the cities.

Third, NAB's own figures show that in the regional branches they are shutting down, while around 90 per cent of customers are registered for online banking, only around a quarter of those are using it. This would be similar for each of the Big Four banks, which are all putting pressure on their staff to register customers to online banking so they can justify closing the branch—and putting those same staff out of jobs.

Postal bank

The bottom line is the banks don't want to serve their customers; they expect customers to change their behaviour to serve the interest of the banks.

In his excellent 2022 book, [Cloudmoney](#), author Brett Scott has exposed the agenda of the global banking oligopoly in closing branches and forcing cashless banking and commerce, which is to trap everyone inside the banking system so they can extract greater profits through taking a cut of all transactions and collecting and selling our data.

Bank branches and ATMs where customers can get cash are ramps in and out of the banking system; removing them is like a casino saying you can't cash in your chips but must stay in the casino.

Given the banks don't want to serve customers, the government should start a public bank that does, which could serve all communities by operating through post offices. Aside from the start-up cost, which it would quickly repay, a public postal bank would pay for itself.

More importantly, it would serve all communities, guarantee that cash would always be available, and force the Big Four to truly compete.

Dale Webster and Martin North have requested the RARAT Committee include a government post office bank in the terms of reference of any inquiry into the regional banking crisis.

What you can do

Parliament resumes on 6 February, so starting today, call and email all the Senators in your state to ask them to support the push for an urgent inquiry.

[Click here for Senators contact details by state.](#)

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