



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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NAB confesses to lying about declining branch visits— why is the government still allowing it to close branches?

This week, National Australia Bank has announced four more regional branch closures: Kyogle and Woolgoolga in northern NSW, and Inglewood and Mitchell in Queensland

NAB's branches at Woolgoolga, Inglewood, and Mitchell are the last banks in town; Inglewood customers now face a 140-kilometre round trip to do banking, while Mitchell customers face a two-hour return trip to visit a bank.

NAB is telling its customers they can use the local post office to bank, but NAB charges higher fees for post office transactions, and only a fraction of banking services are available through Bank@Post.

NAB's lie

NAB has given the same excuse for closing those branches that it has given for the 30 other branches it has closed this year, which is that "fewer customers are coming into branches".

Except, as NAB has effectively confessed, THIS IS A LIE!

The truth, as NAB admitted to the House Economics Committee on 12 July, is that NAB only measures visits to its branches that involve deposits and withdrawals.

House Economics Committee chairman Dr Daniel Mulino asked: "How many interactions are there of a different nature? You probably record all of the different kinds of things that people do when they come in."

NAB CEO Ross McEwen handballed the question to executive Rachel Slade, who replied: "Yes, it's a great question. Those interactions that don't result in a transaction are actually very challenging to measure *and we don't measure them.*"

In other words, NAB doesn't record every time a customer visits a branch to update a signature on an account, or do the required paperwork relating to power of attorney or executing a will, or apply for a loan, or resolve problems from online banking transactions, or any other reason.

This means NAB HAS ABSOLUTELY NO PROOF THAT BRANCH VISITS ARE DECLINING.

Yet it is on a mass-closure spree across Australia in open defiance of the Senate Committee inquiring into bank closures in regional Australia, which asked all banks to pause closures pending the outcome of the inquiry.

This is the same bank that in 2022 published a report called "Land of Opportunity" which boasted of the growing profits NAB is making from regional Australia.

NAB to blame for scammed customers

One very serious consequence of NAB's branch closures is that it exposes customers to sophisticated online scammers, who are adept at fooling even savvy online banking users, let alone vulnerable elderly and disabled bank customers.

Branch closures force customers out of the certainty and security of branch transactions and into the terrifying uncertainty of online banking, where they know they are the primary target of predators.

In the same 12 July hearing, NAB CEO Ross McEwen professed his concern about scammers, and said he always lectures customers: "Never give away your pin, never give away your passwords, never click on links. We have to get to these simple messages."

Yet NAB was on the Morrison Government's Regional Banking Taskforce, which in late 2021 received the submission of the Berrigan Shire Council which reported that because of NAB's branch closures, elderly people now go to the library for help with internet banking and share their confidential logon

details with librarians!

NAB received that submission, ignored it, and is continuing branch closures based on lies!

Australian Citizens Party research Director Robert Barwick today demanded government action:

“Enough is enough”, he said.

“Jim Chalmers must step in now, order NAB to stop closing branches, and to reopen the 30 branches it has closed this year.

“It’s time to force NAB and the other banks to abide by their social licence.”

[Click here to listen to Senate banking closures inquiry leader Senator Gerard Rennick](#) interviewed by Brisbane ABC’s Steve Austin about the state of banking and the solution of a public bank, 11 July 2023.

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

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