



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Communities losing post offices and bank branches— there’s an obvious solution to stop the rot, but is Labor brave enough?

The 200 Glenroy locals who protested the closure of the Glenroy Post Office last Friday, including Harold from *Neighbours*, represent a powerful message to the Albanese government: people are sick to death of losing their essential services.

The Glenroy Post Office is one of 13 post offices that have closed in Victoria in the last year, of around 60 that have closed across Australia in the last two years.

There are now 4,297 Australia Post outlets in Australia, down more than 100 from the peak of 4,400; a 2020 Boston Consulting Group report recommended closing up to 190 post offices.

On top of this, these communities are also losing their bank branches, with the big banks closing more than 1,700 branches since 2017—hundreds in regional Australia, where the impact is even more severe than in metropolitan suburbs.

The banks, especially NAB, are telling their customers they can continue to bank in their community ... at the post office!

Solution

Australian Citizens Party Research Director Robert Barwick said today: “The government is responsible for essential services, so what are Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Communications Minister Michelle Rowland going to do about it?”

“They know there is a win-win solution on the table, that would save both postal and banking services for all communities, which is a national post office bank—a people’s bank.

“A post office bank would:

- Guarantee face-to-face banking services for all communities;
- Bring in more revenue for Australia Post and make post offices financially viable;
- Ensure the continued supply and processing of cash and protect Australians from the banks’ cashless society agenda;
- Break the Big Four banking oligopoly and force them to truly compete, on service.

“The grassroots of their own party want this solution, including the Communications Workers Union, which represents postal workers, and Per Capita, the ALP’s economic think tank.

“The Licensed Post Office Group, which represents small business post office licensees, also wants a postal bank, as does the Australian Citizens Party, the Greens, Katter’s Australian Party, One Nation, and individual politicians in all of the major parties.

“It’s one of the most popular ideas in Australia today.

“The only reason the government wouldn’t go with the post office people’s bank solution is if they are scared of the banks, so that’s the question—are they?”

Barwick said the banks’ behaviour has been so appalling, they deserve no respect from the government, and shouldn’t be allowed to block an obvious solution like a post office bank just because they don’t want to compete.

He reported the ACP was in Parliament last week updating MPs on the progress of the Senate inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia, including:

- Westpac reversing eight branch closures, under the scrutiny of the inquiry, proving the branches are viable;
- CBA likewise announcing a three-year moratorium on any more regional bank closures, again confirming the branches are viable;

- NAB being caught red-handed lying about declining branch visits, when they were forced to admit they don't measure the many visits that don't involve deposits or withdrawals, which since 1 July has been in breach of the much-hyped Branch Closure Support Protocol of the Banking Code of Practice;
- NAB nevertheless defying the committee, by closing or announcing the closure of 34 regional banks just this year.

"The Senate inquiry is unmasking the banks and kicking goals", Barwick said.

"It's time for the government to pay attention and intervene on the banks and Australia Post with the win-win solution."

Robert Barwick will be attending the next hearings of the Senate inquiry in Carnamah and Beverly in WA next Tuesday and Wednesday.