

Time to hold the elite to account



The *Australian Alert Service* is the weekly publication of the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia.

It will keep you updated of strategic events both in Australia, and worldwide, as well as the organising activities of the CEC.

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The new global financial crisis which is currently unfolding is creating mile-wide cracks and fissures, at once exposing the heavily flawed nature of the existing system and opening an unprecedented opportunity for real alternatives.



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Banker says break up the big four



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A former high-flyer at NAB and ANZ says the big lenders have excessive market power and are extracting unreasonable rents from the economy.
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Another high-level Australian banker, Joseph Healy, has called for banking reforms that the CEC is driving with its campaign for bank separation and a government audit.

In the face of the new crisis, varied political forces in many nations are demanding the elite responsible for destroying the economy be held to account for their crimes, namely central banks, too-big-to-fail banks and the Big Four auditors, along with their political co-conspirators. The proposals for Glass-Steagall bank separation and national banking—as the outcome of such an accounting process—are now the topic of much debate in the USA and UK.

In an [interview with CEC Research Director Robert Barwick](#) for his Digital Finance Analytics YouTube channel, banking expert Martin North made the stakes clear. His characterisation of the big audit firms, for which he formerly worked, encapsulates the ethos of all the financial elite we must now hold to account for the consequences of their actions. “I was astonished at the attitude inside those firms”, said North, “which is basically—they will do anything, they will sell their grandmother to make money. There is not a moral bone, in my view, in a number of these organisations. ... There is a critical issue here not just of economics, but also of morality. And it seems to me that this is a great opportunity to underscore again the importance of truth, the importance of actually doing the right thing and not just rolling over for commercial purposes.”

North concurred with Barwick’s call to root out conflicts of interest by breaking up banks and auditing firms, adding that the “Chinese walls” that are supposed to separate the audit and advisory functions of the Big Four accounting firms do not work. “They would all sit around the table—across those party divides, across the firewalls—and basically plot and scheme and hatch. That’s the way it’s done. It’s critical that this is brought into the light so we can get some changes here”, he demanded.

Despite the controlled process of the Banking Royal Commission, rigged from the get-go in its terms

of reference and its final reporting hamstrung by the Treasury, the outrage at the banks and their accomplices who have looted this country has not dissipated. We have a multitude of points of intervention, which continue to open up as a result of that ongoing process. Here are the most pressing:

- Cash ban—get your submission into the Senate Economics Legislation Committee by 15 November. This bill is only in committee due to the pressure exerted by citizens on their MPs; it would otherwise have been law already!
- Audit inquiry—you can make a submission slamming the Big Four audit firms which facilitate the real Black Economy, including large-scale tax evasion, by 28 October. The CEC's legislation to reveal the true state of Australia's Big Four banks, to be conducted by the government's Auditor-General, is a crucial point of intervention here. It is expected to be tabled in parliament soon.
- Bail-in—the CEC has prepared an amendment to the bail-in law snuck through Parliament in 2018, to explicitly exclude deposits. Defeating the cash ban, which is designed to trap people so they can be bailed in to save failing banks, is another phase of this fight.
- Glass-Steagall bill—the CEC's legislation to separate commercial banks from speculation has been tabled already in both the House of Representatives and the Senate and debated (albeit inadequately) by the Senate Economics Legislation Committee, and is set to be reintroduced into the Senate soon.
- National bank bill—the CEC will soon release the updated version of its national bank legislation. This ready-to-go legislation addresses many shortfalls in the existing financial framework, including banking regulation and the generation of public credit to rebuild the productive physical economy.

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