

## Regional banking

Hello,

My name is Karla and I live in Cootamundra, NSW. I moved to Cootamundra some years ago, and I deliberately opened an account with a bank that had a branch in Cootamundra. I did this because I need to go into the branch to find out how much money I have available and to withdraw funds in certain denominations to pay expenses to my mother, such as rent and my half of utility bills and grocery bills - and needless to say, my mother does not have an eftpos machine!

I must also mention that I do not have a car, a smart phone or a computer at home (I cannot afford them), which means I don't have the internet at home, and must go to the library to access the internet - it's where I am sending this email from - and the library says that you DO NOT use the internet at the library for personal things such as online banking or tax, etc, because the computers at the library do not have any protection against viruses and such, so your details will not be secure.

Recently, the ANZ closed their Cootamundra branch. They told me I could continue to do my banking online, saying that most people do it that way anyway, but I told them that I do not have the internet at home, and so they told me that I could withdraw my money through eftpos, but that is a little problematic, seeing as how you cannot check your balance at an eftpos machine, so I couldn't tell how much money was in my account. They then said I could travel to a nearby town where a branch was still open, but I do not have a car, and even if I did, at the time that they closed their local branch, we were in another Covid lockdown, and thus could not travel outside of our LGA, meaning I wouldn't have been able to travel to another town to use another branch - not to mention that the nearest branch was in a town 50 minutes drive away, meaning that it would cost me considerable money (in fuel costs) and considerable time (1 hour 40 minutes round trip) just to withdraw my money. They even suggested I could do my banking at the local post office, but Australia Post doesn't do banking for the ANZ, so that isn't an option either.

Despite trying my best to continue using my ANZ account, I could no longer access all of my money, because I was only getting paper statements once every six months, and so I could not be certain of how much money I had available in my account and I didn't want to overdraw my account. I ended up having to open a new account with a different bank, and then I had to wait until lockdowns eased so I could beg a lift off a friend and travel to the nearby town to close my ANZ account.

It is unreasonable of banks to assume that everyone in a country town has a smart phone or access to secure internet or has regular access to a car, especially in a small country town. The difficulties I faced in trying to do my banking without knowing my balance and without being able to go to another town and without being able to get certain denominations of notes proved very difficult, and there was absolutely no alternative for me but to go to another bank. Of course, I am now worried that the other banks in town will close their branches too, leaving me in a very difficult position, but I at least chose a bank that does allow banking at the local post office, so I have a back-up option, should that bank close its local branch.

Banks already make a massive profit, so why do they need to take away people's options in this way, just to make a little more profit? Are they so greedy that they will beggar people in country towns by forcing them to spend their money to buy devices they can't afford and cannot even buy in town - keep this in mind: I cannot buy a computer in the town of Cootamundra, as there is no shop in town that sells them! I can buy a smart phone from the local Woolworths supermarket, but that is only if I can afford it, and I cannot. The banks should not be so greedy as to take away branches from

isolated country towns where there is little choice for people who cannot afford cars or devices or the internet.

Thank you for listening to me.

Kind regards,

Karla.