

To the committee,

There are three aspects of your enquiry I wish to focus on and make comment.

4. What are the impacts of regional bank branch closures on the banking needs of individuals?

Many people particularly the elderly, infirm or disabled have to travel huge distances to access banking services and for many without their own transport it is impossible to obtain banking services. To blithely state there is internet banking completely misses the point with remote and regional Australia. Not only are many people not tech savvy and unable to access banking services via the internet, internet services themselves are often very poor or completely absent in parts of Australia. It only takes a mass flooding event, fire or cyclone and vast swathes of remote and regional Australia is cut off.

If banks refuse to service these areas then a government-owned POSTAL SAVINGS BANK must be given a banking licence so regional banking can continue to serve the population if the Big 4 chooses not to.

5. What are the impacts on the banking needs of businesses, community organisations and communities?

I know the banks offer services where a loan officer will travel to the client to facilitate lending but they do not drive 1000's kilometres into the outback or remote Cape York communities to do this. They buzz around cities and suburbia – hardly a satisfactory service for those communities who have lost all banking facilities in their town. And it is only one service – it doesn't allow for deposits, withdrawals, applying for new cards, opening new accounts etc etc. These are all services where those who are not tech savvy actually require a face to face interaction. Despite the banks' best intentions Australia can never go Cashless – when disaster strikes and the ATM's are not working; are empty or simply no longer there Australian's will visit their emergency cash stash. To think this habit will go away is to hugely underestimate the preparedness of most Australians. A disaster kit often includes cold hard cash. This includes small business as well as individuals. It is interesting to note that China's CBDC has not got rid of cash. The Chinese still carry cash although seldom use it but they have the option. I

would recommend reading *China's Digital Currency Revolution – Cashless* by Richard Turrin,

Once banking services disappear from a town it becomes harder and harder for businesses in that community to continue. Where do they do their banking services? How do they get loans or apply for extended credit facilities if they have to drive hundreds of kilometres to access those services. Sometimes it is just not possible to complete all documentation for banking services over the internet and an in-person visit is necessary. A Small business owner could lose an entire day just driving to and from their nearest bank to access their needs. In small business that means that business is one person down for the whole day sometimes longer.

Even in the (normally busy) tourist town of Cairns I have witnessed the demise of a small local group of shops because of the closure of two banks. Both these banks served the surrounding businesses and because of their after hours cash deposit facilities small business owners who lived north of the city could safely deposit their days' takings at the bank on their way home. They now have to drive back into the city to do this. It is only small but on a daily basis this little inconvenience adds up. In this one shopping area now the banks have gone there are more shop vacancies than there are occupied premises. This apparently small and unimportant scenario is being played out in other locations not just in this city but all over remote and regional Australia.

If banks refuse to service these areas then a government-owned POSTAL SAVINGS BANK must be given a banking licence so regional banking can continue to serve the population if the Big 4 chooses not to.

9. What are alternatives to bank branch models that would maintain or improve banking services and accessibility in areas where branches have been closed?

The only way to ensure ongoing banking services is through the establishment of a government-owned POSTAL SAVINGS BANK. If the big banks are not prepared to service these areas then a licence must be granted to allow A Postal Savings Bank to fill the gap and stop the rot in our small regional towns.