

Submission to Regional Banking Taskforce

Dear Regional Banking Taskforce,

I am a private citizen and am very concerned at the massive closures of bank branches, not only in regional areas, but in urban areas of our capital cities.

I believe this to be wrong for the following reasons:

- Banks are an essential service. The access to banking services for all people in a community is vital for a thriving economy;
- Many people do not use online banking and payment systems and are reliant on cash withdrawals and deposits through a bank branch;
- Forcing people to use Australia Post to do their banking is unfair as this is quite expensive (\$4.50 per transaction) and Australia Post franchisees are not fully compensated by the banks for providing this service;
- The concentration of bank branches in major regional hubs and cities will lead to people who live in remote communities to drive longer distances to access a bank branch thus increasing pollution and greenhouse emissions.

I also believe this is part of the ongoing effort by the major banks to eventually stop the use of cash as evidenced by the closure of ATMs as well in regional communities. What is needed is for the government to establish a government run bank to compete against the private banks, have a branch in every community and offer high quality banking services. It should:

- Guarantee banking services to all communities, and force the big four private banking oligopoly to actually compete on service for the first time in 25 years;
- Guarantee banking services to everyone and every legal business without discrimination—no “debanking” as the private banks are doing to more and more businesses and people;
- Guarantee deposits, as the bank would be owned by the Commonwealth government;
- Support the cash payments system which the private banks are trying to get rid of—the banks have ripped out one third of Australia’s ATMs in recent years, but Christine Holgate ensured Bank@Post would supply cash;
- Lend to local individuals and small businesses in the communities the postal bank serves;
- Invest surplus deposits in a national development or infrastructure bank, to be a source of credit for the economic development of Australia;

- Break the monopoly of the big four banks, including their power over Australian politics.

Kind Regards,

Frank Bernabei.