

Secretariat,
Regional Banking Taskforce,
Financial System Division,
The Treasury,
Langton Crescent,
PARKES ACT 2600.

My name is Ian Johnson, a resident of Kingaroy, in the South Burnett Regional Council area, and have lived here for the previous 5 ¼ years. I'm an older member of the community, and married, with no extended family in this community. I am writing to you as a concerned local citizen regarding the current round of bank branch closures and the effects this has on employment opportunities, and financial literacy. Since 2018, Kingaroy has lost the following physical bricks and mortar branches:-

Suncorp,
Bank Of Qld,
And our ANZ branch advised to close in March 2022.

I have attempted to voice my distress, frustration, and displeasure at this intended move by the ANZ, but have not had any meaningful response from the said bank. The move appears to be a shortsighted attempt to line shareholders pockets and boost their profit margins even further at the expense of loyal customers, many who have supported this branch for an extended number of years.

I tender the following impacts of a regional/remote branch closure;-

Being forced to use the digital channels over time, myself even having had firsthand experience, by being told by your staff, "oh that can be done online". What about those clients who have trouble using the digital platforms? The impact on those of our community that are mentally challenged, find change difficult, or like the personal touch, I believe has not been considered.

The customer count figures being used to support this move, are false, as they include the impact of Covid 19 and do not reflect a true and accurate customer decline.

A previous CEO of your bank is on public record as saying he regretted closing branches, because of the impact on customers, especially in rural and remote areas, and the loss of access to financial products and advice, suitable to the local environment the branch operates in.

Increased cash holdings by small business and personal customers, resulting in an increase in opportunistic crime,

No public transport, to access the closest face to face branch in Dalby 1 ½ hours away, or Toowoomba, or Gympie, 2 hours away. **This move will leave the South Burnett local government area with no bricks and mortar representation from your bank.**

An unreliable digital platform, that when issues and outages arise force customers to spend lengthy periods of time on a phone, or email to access any help. Not all customers have access to, or can afford reliable internet, so they will face increased frustration trying to access digital services. The internet at best even with the NBN rollout, leaves a lot to be desired. As has been seen on previous occasions, the ability to use, and have a reliable digital platform is fraught with risk. It also opens up those “at risk” customers to a greater potential of financial loss, from scams, fraud, elder abuse etc. At least a local presence addresses some of these issues, instead of using an algorithm to spot potential financial loss.

Increased business costs, as changes of office holders, provision of signatures etc, allowing authorized persons access to my accounts, can't be done on line, but still needs personal access and assistance.

Concern that the Smart ATM would be removed at a future time, thereby increasing customer costs to access cash withdrawals.

ANZ banking is currently not accessible through local Australia Post outlets.

In my letter of complaint to ANZ, I suggested that a presence be maintained, in the form of a kiosk, manned part time, with ATM and a personal presence instead of a full branch. The current branch is closed for lunch, which would be the

busiest time, again a disadvantage for those who work and require personal assistance. The lack of reliable public transport, and lack of family unit or friend, put those who want to access face to face services at a disadvantage. None of these suggestions were seen as a solution for either side.

If bank branches continue to be withdrawn, contract with Australia Post to provide a banking service to those needing personal assistance, Business and private customers,

Put in place a minimum standard of service obligation on banks to maintain a set number of regional/remote branches similar to the Australia Post and Telstra requirements. Kingaroy is not a small town, but a large regional council area, serving a number of remote communities who see Kingaroy as their major business center. We currently have representation from all the big 4 banks, but for how much longer? Only as long as there is a profit to be made, without accounting for loyal customers who have supported these banks over a large number of years.

Finally, thank you for the opportunity to have my say through this submission to you. I look forward to having some of the recommendations being adopted and change for the better to be implemented via this taskforce.

Ian Johnson

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