

FROM : BEVERLEY C.W.A.

TO : COMMITTEE SECRETARY

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES ON RURAL, REGIONAL AFFAIRS & TRANS<sup>PORT</sup>

P.O. Box 6100

PARLIAMENT HOUSE,

CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600.

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please find enclosed ideas about Bank Closures In Regional Australia, with reference to the points in your email. The ideas enclosed are from the BEVERLEY C.W.A.

a) Branch Closure - our only bank branch - ANZ closed 28<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2021 after a 6 month warning period. Despite being a well patronized branch, staffed by local employees, with huge monetary deposits from farming & businesses, no amount of town meetings, letter writing & direct approaches to head office - made any difference. Leaving the town with a 72 Km <sup>way</sup> trip to Northam, the next closest A.N.Z. Branch. The townsfolk & businesses were devastated, imagining the effect on their future livelihoods.

b) Economic & Welfare Impacts Of Bank Closures on Customers & Regional Communities :

1. Banks provide employment in small towns. eg. Beverley used to have 2½ full time bank officers, who were trusted & well known in our community. They had to find other employment after experiencing an extremely stressful time scaling back the bank operations to ½ day & dealing with annoyed customers. Also re-deployed <sup>the afternoons</sup> to phone service in
2. Banks used prominent buildings in the main street of country towns. Many towns now have vacant buildings where the bank used to be.
3. Delay in transactions & information - not everyone knows how to do phone banking, internet or use the unreliable A.T.M - so you have to wait until you

can travel to the regional town to do your banking.

4. Economic Effect - if you go out of town to bank, you probably shop there as well → loss of business in the small towns. eg. Aldi & Spud Shed now thriving in Northam.
5. Small clubs & organizations - banking the profits of fundraising is difficult - no night safe - people are forced to hold large amounts of cash in their homes until they can travel to the bank branch to deposit the cash. STRESSFUL
6. Staff cuts in banks in regional towns - despite the branch closures in surrounding towns - staff teller numbers have been reduced. eg. Northam A.N.Z. used to have 2 full time tellers - now only 1 part time - trying to force customers to use the Smart A.T.M.
7. Also reduced teller hours in Regional Centre - Northam ANZ is electronic ATM transactions only between 10 - 11 AM each day. The Commonwealth Bank in Northam closes at 1 PM each day.
8. Loss of bank sponsorship for local events - banks have always supported local events / clubs / groups with special prizes. This is not as likely to happen now as they do not live in the local town & are not so involved in the community.
9. Loss of employment training opportunity with the local District High School Workplace Learning Program - small town branches used to support the school by taking on a trainee student, during school hours.
10. Aged population of Beverley & similar towns - people of limited physical mobility & economic means - have difficulty travelling to the regional bank branch. They used to be able to park directly outside the front door of the bank & helpful, local staff would assist them into the bank.



## (C) The Effect Of Bank Closures Or The Removal Of Face-To-Face Cash Services On Access To Cash :

(3)

1. People are not getting the face-to-face contact needed. They are not getting the incidental answers, small pieces of helpful information & guidance they need to conduct their financial business. Not everyone can access the website to find the relevant information.
2. There are frequent problems with the ATM - out of order, no power, swallowing the card as the tap screen doesn't work (too much dust). People can't withdraw their money - totally unreliable.
3. Distance travelled to Regional Towns to the bank - the cost, inconvenience, cars not reliable over a long distance in 40°+ heat. People's cars can do short trips around local town but not the long trip needed to go to a bank. Need to ask friends to take them.
4. Bank call centres have a long waiting time - holding onto the phone - as you try to enquire or settle a problem. Often an Asian person answers & you are not sure if you still have the bank's number - or have you been transferred to a scam number? To progress your enquiry, you have to reveal your personal details & security word to that person. I find it risky & stressful concerning my privacy & account security.
5. Reduced Bank Hours in Regional Centres - see N° 7 on page 2.
6. Australia Post does not deal with ANZ for over the counter bank agency facilities. It is very difficult for residents to access cash when the ATM is not working :: wasted trips to town.
7. Clubs & organizations - when fundraising - a cash float is difficult to organize - you have to go out of town to the branch of a bank or put in a special request early, before the event, at the Post Office.

(d) The Effectiveness of government banking statistics ---  
The Beverley C.W.A. has no knowledge of this section.

(e) Consideration Of Solutions And Any Other Related Matters :      a few easy solutions :

1. A bank agency set up within an existing business in a secured area of the shop - run by 1 bank employee - where people have access to basic deposit - withdrawal services in the small towns.
2. A government department set up to research the banking facilities in small towns, record data. Facilitate with neighbouring bank to help them set up an agency in the town. Partly finance the bank to set up a secure area within a local business.
3. Promote the Community Bank idea with the Shire involved - assist a Shire to facilitate how to set up a Community Bank, like Bendigo Bank.
4. A town with no bank slowly dies - people travel out of town & their money is spent out of the small town. Small, local businesses suffer & the large multi-national companies in regional towns prosper. Every town needs to have a bank - even if it is only part time.

Thankyou - I hope there are some points here to help your investigation of this serious problem.

Mrs Diane Colebrook,                      Secretary,

D. Colebrook,

Beverley C.W.A.  
Central Wheatbelt, West. Aust.