

Bank Closures in regional Australia – Submission Bronwyn Davies

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Regarding: Bank closures in Regional Queensland – Somerset Region and Surrounds

I am a resident of the Kilcoy District, Kilcoy is my closest town. I moved here in 2017 and as an ANZ customer was delighted Kilcoy had full banking services. In 2018 I was elected President of the Kilcoy Chamber of Commerce and have continued to hold several community and business support roles. I ran for local government elections in 2020 and was a key advocate for local business at the time of the closure announcement.

The Kilcoy Community unified over the imminent closure of the ANZ Bank in February 2020. Toogoolawah had already lost the ANZ Branch in 2016. ANZ then sited Kilcoy as the Branch for residents, a distance of 34.1 km about 30 mins.

The ANZ Bank had been an important community asset for around 70 years until its closure.

The owner operators of the building location of the ANZ Branch, were told by ANZ they would engage a long term lease arrangement. The Sale of the building was settled on this basis. 6 months into that new lease arrangement, the ANZ Property Group pulled out. The owners of the building struggled to find new tenants. Success came in late 2022. (TOR (a)) (Refer: Attachment Document 1)

Many business owners were interviewed about the closure and the impact the closure would have on their operations. You can view their distress via the link. (TOR (c))

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omfTBEPgyWw>

This video (above) was made as a consequence of the closure by the Kilcoy Community. This video touched a program story chord with ACA (link below). The ACA team came out to Kilcoy and interviewed many within the community.

<https://9now.nine.com.au/a-current-affair/bank-closures-outrage-kilcoy-residents/a061f0a7-6a2b-47c3-b425-42b1bd3596c9>

Impacts to the community:

Community groups, predominately Volunteers, require in house 100 identification point's verification for incorporated changes of Annual General Meetings. This requires a 2 hour turnaround with an appointment to be made in reduced timeframes of the nearest branch in Woodford. Volunteers have to travel to either Woodford (24km) or Morayfield (51.5km) being the nearest operating ANZ branches. (TOR (c) (a)) (Refer: Attachment Document 2)

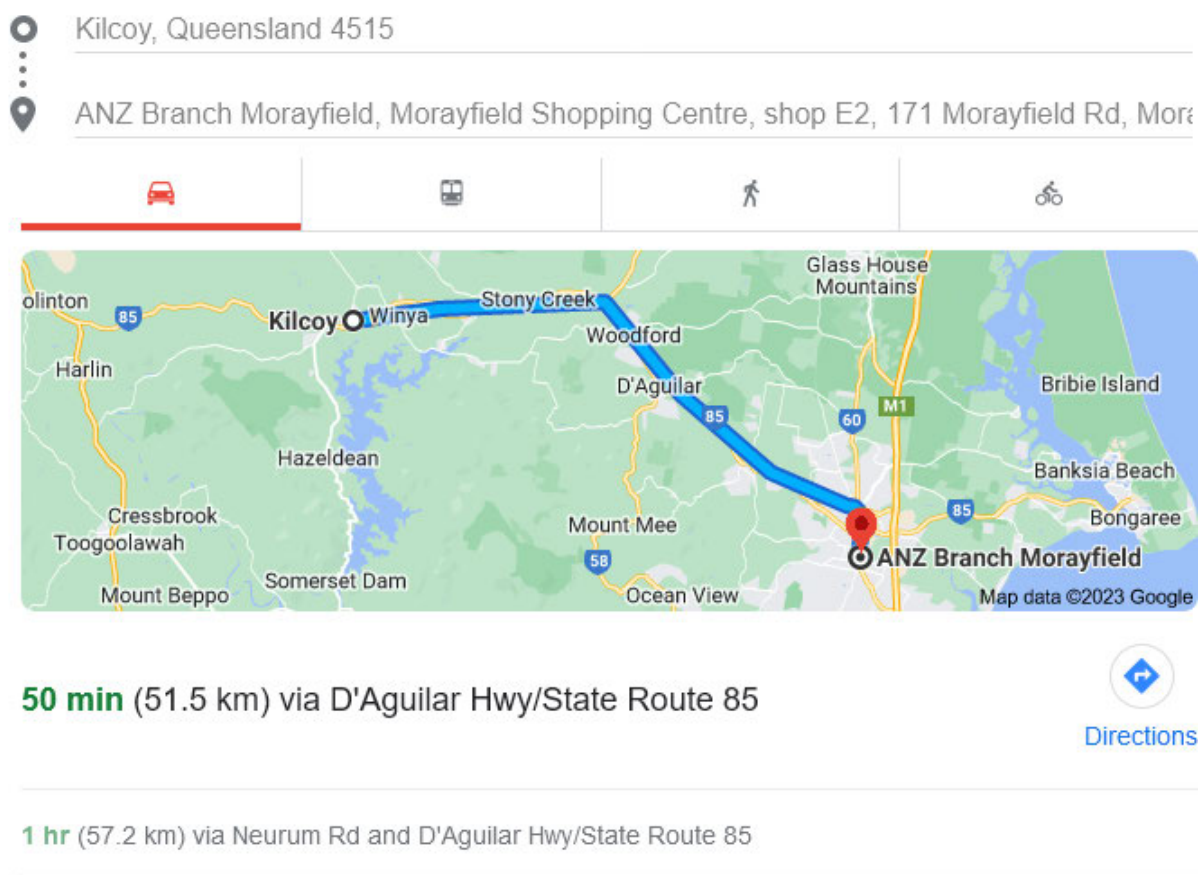
Removal of face to face interactions in Regional areas impacts everyone in the community. From Local schools, transport services, businesses, community groups, elderly and local activities. Cash is still very much currency as technology tries and fails to keep with Regional needs. Not every situation can be accommodated by 'Square' facilities. (TOR (b)) (Refer: Attachment Document 4)

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There is no ability to capture data once the closure has been enacted. Many within the Regional communities who come to live in the area, bring their BSB's accounts with them. The BSB does not change so any activity in the regional branch is sidelined as being from the location of the BSB or former BSB location if that branch has been closed. (TOR (d))

Businesses and the local community must re-evaluate their systems and processes with the bank services terminating. Workers Health and Safety, Insurances, Security and mobility. There is a financial cost to all branch members associated with the closure of the local banking services. (TOR (b))

Many letters of support from across business, local and state government sectors were forward to ANZ CEO, Mr Shayne Elliott regarding the unwelcome closure of the bank. (Refer: Attachment Document 3)



Local country market operators who held ANZ accounts had nowhere to deposit the Market takings (cash) Organisers from across Toogoolawah, Kilcoy, Moore and Linville were forced to change Bank providers, to make the necessary journeys for the point's identification scores and use the Australia Post services for these deposits. These are volunteer community members. (TOR (c))

Local community members were forced to change bank providers to one that was serviced by the Australia Post. ANZ does not subscribe to the service.

One local business was so discouraged, the owner relocated to Woodford to enable better access, in the short term, to ANZ Banking services.

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Another business operator tried but closed their doors in part as a consequence of lack of banking services. Sadly, they moved to Beerwah and subsequently lost their branch a few months after Kilcoy terminated. (See below)

Regional banks have always been the community hub and heart of the local regional commerce.

Regional areas accommodate Agricultural businesses where the ability to meet the operating times of the nearest branch can be greatly challenged. The local Woodford branch for the Kilcoy District runs on a part time operating basis. (Refer image 14.12.2021 below)

<https://www.sentinelnews.com.au/latest-news/whats-happening-with-anz-bank-in-woodford>

What's happening with ANZ Bank in Woodford?

ANZ Bank in Woodford has had its hours reduced to 9.30am to 12.30pm on weekdays, meaning the bank is only opening its doors for 15 hours each week.




This has caused ample angst and dismay among locals.

Image 14.12.2021 Woodford ANZ – Sentinel News

The ANZ Branch of Beerwah was touted as an open Branch to Kilcoy residents. This was a lie as this branch closed first in June 2020 and then permanently late in September 2020. (Refer image *Beerwah ANZ Closure*)






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(Image: Beerwah ANZ Closure)

**Glasshouse Country & Maleny News**


1 September 2020 · 🌐

BEERWAH ANZ ANNOUNCES CLOSURE-
After temporarily closing in June, then reopening a week later after a groundswell of local discontent, it has been announced that the Beerwah ANZ branch will permanently close next February.
Locals who are customers of the branch told GC&M News that they received an email last Monday advising them of ANZ's devastating decision.
With the subject line "ANZ Beerwah branch is closing and we're here to help", the unattributed email gave no specific reasons why Beerwah had to close other than a general statement relating to "changing customer banking preferences".
"Every day more of our customers are choosing the convenience of doing their banking when and where it suits them," the email stated.
Make sure you pick up a copy of the paper at one of our handy local pick up spots.
<https://issuu.com/glasshousec.../docs/gcn-in-house19aug20...>





ANZ Beerwah

 53

44 comments 14 shares

Some of the comments from within this 1.9.2020 social media post...

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*Was with Westpac - and they closed... 😞

*I live in Kilcoy - and the ANZ branch (the only bank in existence!) closed earlier this year....



*I work in Beerwah and as advised by ANZ, use Beerwah branch instead- and guess what.....???? CLOSED 😞

*So now I will be exploring ALL other options

Thank god for Glasshouse Country News ! The bank we opened our bank accounts with have again failed to keep their customers informed !

Gatton next ...bye bye ANZ.

Gatton ANZ closed its branch on 25th August 2021

Gatton residents were forced to accommodate greater distances of travel to remain using their preferred ANZ services. A distance of 36.5 km and about 35 mins to Toowoomba or 54.3 KM about 42 mins to Ipswich Riverlink Branch. (See Gatton social media images 1 and 2)

(Gatton Social Media image 1)



(Gatton Social Media comment 2)



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Somerset Region lost its part time operated NAB Branch, located in Esk on 3rd November 2022. Somerset Region (Population 2021 Census 25,391), Kilcoy being the northern gateway, does not have ANY major bank presence. The anticipated population growth of the Somerset Region is 36,530 by 2036. (Ref: Somerset Regional Council Tourism Strategy 2021-2025)

Bendigo Bank is located in Lowood (79.6 km and 1hr from Kilcoy) and Blackbutt (54.3 km and 39 min from Kilcoy). Kilcoy attempted to achieve a Bank presence with Bendigo bank however the community was unsuccessful.

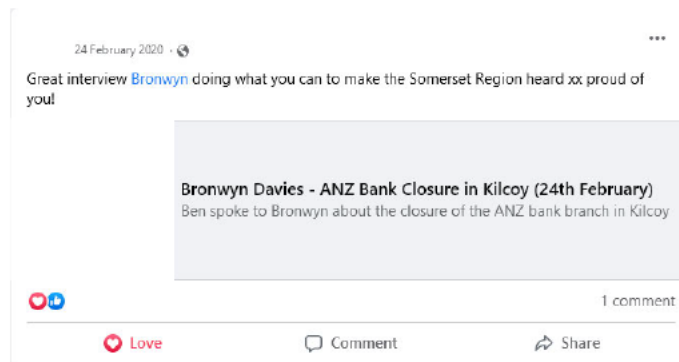
Kilcoy is home to Kilcoy Global Foods. An international Meatworks employing thousands, most of whom are Visa recipients. These residents use English as a second language. Those services who provide second language services to these new residents utilised the Kilcoy Branch to help educate the new arrivals understand financial literacy, bank accounts, loans, rental payments, cash availability, foreign exchange rates and more. Our Kilcoy ANZ Branch was an essential service! (TOR (b))

In conclusion:

Regional Australia needs face to face Banking Services for the whole of community transactional access. Residents must travel unfair, compared to urban residents, longer distances and for whole parts of a day(s) for just any service in respect of change of account details, transfers, Loans, community AGM authorisation updates, cash deposits and many more types of service that must be done face to face as is required by ANZ (Bank) policies and procedures. (NB: personal experience)

In many regional areas, like Somerset Qld there are NO fully operating banking services from ANY of the major banking providers.

This interview with Queensland Rural Radio speaks to the issues. (TOR (e))



https://player.whooshkaa.com/episode?id=579501&fbclid=IwAR0_qpskkyfHdgTAawWruAZGzPZfkgFzplOjWdonoKx6-5PmH9qNW_8ahDM

Despite the recommendations and outcomes from the Treasury Regional Banking Taskforce Final Report 2022, there is no will of the financial banking sector to recognise the impacts of Branch closures at the coal face. The choice of ANZ to remove its services from Australia Post Banking services supports this observation. If nothing else, consider a requirement on major banks to join the Australia post network where their branches are (to be) terminated. (TOR (e))