

## **City of Wagga Wagga leads in calling for urgent government action on crisis in banking and postal services; Citizens Party calls on all Councils to add their voice**

The Citizens Party applauds the Wagga Wagga City Council for taking the lead in pressuring the Albanese government to act on the crisis of closing bank branches and post offices by establishing a government bank in post offices.

The Citizens Party has fought very hard to expose and stop Australia's super-profitable banks from ripping branch services away from communities, and to stop Australia Post management doing the same thing with essential post office services.

At its 19 January meeting last night, the Council passed the following motion moved by Councillor Richard Foley:

“That Wagga Wagga City Council advocate for Federal Government action to address the escalating crisis in regional banking and postal services and support the establishment of a government-owned post office bank as recommended by the Senate Inquiry into Bank Closures in Regional Australia.

“That Council:

a) note the ongoing closure of regional bank branches across Australia and the growing pressure this places on already-stretched post offices which are also facing closure or downgrading of services

b) acknowledge the findings of the 2023–24 Senate Inquiry into Bank Closures in Regional Australia, which recommended that access to banking and cash be designated as an essential service and that the Federal Government investigate the feasibility of a government-owned bank operating through post offices

c) recognise the significant and predictable negative impacts these closures have on regional communities, small businesses, older residents, and local economies reliant on reliable access to cash and essential services

d) write to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Communications requesting an urgent response to the Senate Inquiry report, commitment to its recommendations, and the commissioning of an expert panel to investigate the establishment of a government post office bank

e) provide copies of this resolution to the Member for Riverina and the Member for Farrer seeking their support for immediate Federal action.”

Speaking to the motion, Councillor Foley, a member of the Citizens Party, said: “Bank closures are not just an inconvenience; they are fundamentally changing people's way of life and the way they do business.

“When the banks leave the pressure doesn’t disappear, it shifts”, he explained. “Post offices are forced to pick up the slack. ... At the same time Australia Post itself is moving towards a model that reduces full-service postal services.

“So what we are seeing is a double failure: banks withdrawing services, particularly from the bush, and post offices being hollowed out.”

Supporting the motion, Councillor McKinnon said: “I totally agree with the premise that our rural and regional communities are suffering badly with the situation as it’s developed in the banking services sector, and I would hate to see post offices go the way, where I know many people currently rely on the post office for their cash transactions, if they are reduced that would be a huge concern.”

“I support you on this”, Mayor Dallas Tout added. “Any pressure that can be put on to have the federal government try and stop closing the post offices, because if we don’t have the post office, that’s less places we can have a post office bank.”

Citizens Party National Chairman Robert Barwick called on other Councils to follow Wagga Wagga’s lead and join in pressuring the Albanese government to act: “We have a crisis in banking and postal services, but we also have a solution, recommended by a major, all-party Senate inquiry, except the government is ignoring it.

“City of Wagga Wagga is leading on this because local government is closest to the crisis. If enough Councils add their voice they can’t be ignored.”