

Rural Access to Banking

I am a Community Bank director, but the view I present is my own.

I note that in spite of assurances made by the big four banks, branch closures continue at a significant rate. Community Banks (locally owned and supported franchises of Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Ltd) often step into the breach to provide continued access to banking services. Community Banks themselves are now under pressure in certain regions. The last men standing are post offices (often privately owned businesses), and the government needs to act to encourage the network of regional post offices to provide their communities with access to rural banking services. Rather than "dumping" on Australia Post (which occurred with the disgraceful bipartisan Christine Holgate affair), a solution would be a government owned postal bank. It would

- be a new product for post offices to sell and profit from
- ensure continued access to banking services and access to cash in regional communities
- compete somewhat with existing commercial banks (providing a clear downside to bailing out of a country town - ie losing customers)

Many thanks for the opportunity to submit a comment.

Best wishes

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John Bird