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Feedback and Comments on the intended Winding Down of the Cheque System

The elephant in the room with Online Monetary Transactions is the insecurity of the transacting conduit, the internet. If the government is not presently funding research into strategies and actions to make internet communication within Australia more secure, then it needs to. Research funding by the Australian government is said to be presently 0.49% of GDP which is far below the aspirational figure of 3%. (One of my sons is a researcher with an Immunology Team and he would particularly appreciate an increase in funding in his research field). The Australian Government needs to recognise the close relationship between research funding and consequent paydays and productivity.

The Consultation Paper lacks rigor and appears to have an agenda by not highlighting the 'paper trail' (a record largely absent with on-line monetary transactions) of the now almost historic cheque payment system; by mentioning the amount of TWO MILLION DOLLARS lost to Cheque Fraud each year when that amount pales in comparison to the extraordinary figure of around THREE BILLION DOLLARS lost by Australians each year to Online Internet Fraud; by mentioning the \$5.00 cost of processing a cheque while omitting mention of any counterbalancing lucrative banking activity; and by placing Bank Cheques at the head of the Cessation Time-Line when it would be prudent to retain the bank cheque option for large sums, Trust and Community Organisations Accounts .

It was very predictable that personal cheque usage would experience a sharp decline with the advent of debit and credit cards and payment facilities such as Australia Post BillPay. Substantial savings have already been realised from this decline.

Ceasing all cheque payments is throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Bank Cheques are required for the accountability of large sums, the accountability of Trust Account Operators and the accountability for expenditure of Community Organisations. To deny that facility to Community Organisations would be a repeat of the Public Liability Insurance coverage fiasco for community events. A fiasco, I believe, that has yet to be resolved by good governance. The legal fraternity should not be consulted on the wisdom of retaining cheques for settlements as moral judgement is required and the adversarial system of law, regretfully, seldom delivers in that regard. They would predictably opt for expediency.

On-line Banking in its present form cannot replace the 'checks and balances' (paper trail) provided by the cheque system. If there were sufficient barcodes to go around, I could pay all my bills from suppliers of my small business with a debit card and a barcoded bill, at Australia

Post BillPay, with better accountability than the risky process of paying an amount into a suppliers' bank account via On-line Banking facilities accessible to the world of cybercrime. The only problem with this method of payment is that it transfers the costs from the banks to the suppliers, something which the banks have become expert at.

It is hard not to notice the disappearing 'shopfront' of community banking ('asset stripping' of their community obligations, in my opinion) and not question the banks' place amongst bona fide businesses listed on the stock exchange. A more suitable category would be a fully government regulated (regulated down to the selection of the CEO whose salary should not exceed that of the Prime Minister) financial body with a relatively safe return to shareholders similar to the Australian Government bond rate. It is little wonder that there have been calls for the nationalisation/regulation of banks over the decades.

On a topical note, the relationship between a bank customer and On-line banking facilities appears similar to the relationship between the British Post On-line postal facilities and its Licensees and we all know how that ended. Australia Post uses a similar system and is currently upgrading to one with the same pedigree as the British Post On-line facility (and the licensees are worried). Unless the On-line user is afforded software which interacts with/shadows the banking or post office facility/software, there is no real accountability, that is, no equal footing exists.

It is difficult to comment on issues related to the cheque system and its insecure replacement, one-way On-Line Banking, and not reveal a well based and time tested aversion to the banks' extremely poor handling of customer service. We are now at the stage of communicating with the banks by Mobile Phone Messaging which I fully expect to morph into AI Bots in the very near future. It is impossible to communicate with something you cannot reason with! Are present day banking employees so poorly educated or trained that they are unable to comprehend the written word! It certainly seems that way, given that customers are prohibited from communicating with the banks by letter or email!

Australia Post's 'Bank@Post' Service is mentioned as being helpful during the banks' diminishing public presence. Rather, it is being 'put-upon' by the banks for cash handling and other banking transactions while not having the revenue raising means of banks to cover the associated costs. Remuneration based on 'wages only' is making the operation of Licensed Post Offices unviable.

My daughters message, as Valedictorian, to her fellow Humanities Faculty students in 2021, was to be like the Romans in their many civil achievements, and that was to Be Bold. Now is a time for the Government to lead and be bold. Increase funding for research, including On-Line Internet Security, regulate the banks, implement Boxes 2, 3 and 4 of the Staged Transition Plan in the order of 3,2,4, discard Boxes 1 and 5, and 'seed' a manufacturing industry in this country.

Calling the perpetrators of the MediBank hack something like 'scumbags', or a call from the former PM to keep our internet security up to date, or a call from the present PM to switch our phones off for five minutes a day, is certainly not Being Bold!

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