**No post office People’s Bank without post offices!**

**SUPPORT POST OFFICES—TELL THE GOVERNMENT TO STOP AUSTRALIA POST FROM CLOSING THEM.**

The Australian Citizens Party (ACP) welcomes the Senate regional bank closures inquiry’s recommendation to consider establishing a public bank, including a post office bank.

However, the ACP is extremely concerned that this recommendation is being sabotaged by Australia Post CEO Paul Graham’s plans to close hundreds post offices around Australia, perhaps thousands if he succeeds in lobbying the government to ditch the organisation’s community service obligation (CSO) to maintain a minimum of 4,000 post offices.

ACP Research Director Robert Barwick said today: “A post office bank won't work without post offices—it’s as simple as that.

“An Aussie post office People’s Bank would be a powerful addition to the banking system in Australia, as it would be able to serve all communities through Australia Post’s network of 4,271 post offices, which is more than all private bank branches combined.

“It would give all Australians the option of banking with a public bank for benefits they don’t get from the Big Four: guaranteed deposits; guaranteed face-to-face customer service; guaranteed cash withdrawals and deposits; and low-cost business and personal loans for investment in their communities.

“But the government is allowing Australia Post to sabotage that potential by closing hundreds of post offices, and even more if it can get away with it.”

At its peak, Australia Post had 4,327 postal outlets, but now has 4,271, and CEO Paul Graham has made it clear he intends to reduce that to 4,000, which is the minimum number required under Australia Post’s CSO.

In a 24 October 2023 Senate Estimates hearing, Senator Henderson asked Paul Graham: “It sounds like part of your plan is to close a lot of post offices. How many do you plan to close? What is your plan?”

Graham replied: “As I said, we have a regulatory obligation to maintain 4,000 post offices. We will maintain that obligation, and 2½ thousand will be in regional and rural Australia. We have no plans other than to maintain the regulatory obligation that we have. We have 271 post offices above that regulation today.”

He revealed that Australia Post has offered to buy out 274 licensees who run small business Licensed Post Offices (LPOs), for a pathetic 1.5 times their income, which would reduce the network down to the 4,000 bare minimum and take away postal services from hundreds of towns.

He further revealed that Australia Post is continuing to lobby the government to end the regulatory obligation to maintain 4,000 postal outlets, so he can withdraw postal services from hundreds or even thousands more communities.

Although the Albanese government’s recent Australia Post Modernisation Review rejected Paul Graham’s request to scrap the regulatory minimum of 4,000 postal outlets, it also rejected a call to define the 4,000 as “manned” postal outlets, which leaves open the possibility that Graham could count automated postal lockers as outlets to drastically reduce the post office network.

Barwick said: “Paul Graham’s plan is outrageous—postal services are essential services. These communities depend on their post offices, and many, many people would be severely disrupted if they lose them.

“It’s also unnecessary”, he added. “A post office People’s Bank would generate sufficient revenue to fund the existing postal network and keep it commercially viable.

“It’s a beautiful, win-win solution to save both essential services—postal and banking.”

Barwick warned Australia was heading towards a disaster like the UK post office scandal exposed in *Mr Bates vs the Post Office* unless the government intervened to save the network.

“To save post offices, support a People’s Bank”, he said.