**Chalmers must revoke ANZ-Suncorp merger until Shayne Elliott saves Katoomba**

Multiple protests today, in Katoomba and Brisbane, will call on Treasurer Jim Chalmers to enforce the condition he imposed on the ANZ-Suncorp merger that ANZ must not close any regional branches for three years.

Australian Citizens Party (ACP) Research Director Robert Barwick said ANZ’s cavalier closure of its Katoomba branch in defiance of Treasurer Jim Chalmers’ conditions should be the final straw for the government in standing up to the banks.

“Katoomba, which is 55 kilometers inland from Penrith over the Great Dividing Range, is regional by any common sense definition”, Barwick observed, "look at it on a map!”

Curiously, since 2017, bank regulator APRA’s Points of Presence database has had two listings for Katoomba-Leura, one classified “inner regional”, but the other “major city”.

ANZ cherry-picked the classification of “major city” to justify closing its Katoomba branch, despite the Treasurer’s conditions, hiding behind a thin veneer of legality.

“Since when is a town of 13,000 people a major city?” Barwick asked.

“This closure is clearly in breach of the spirit of the Treasurer’s conditions, and arguably in outright breach of the actual conditions.”

Barwick pointed out that more than 15,000 people have signed a Change.dot.org petition opposing the Katoomba ANZ closure.

“Politicians need to pay attention to this”, he urged. “It reflects the reality of the devastating disruption communities experience when banks withdraw face-to-face branch services, which was well documented by the recent Senate inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia.”

The ACP is calling on the Albanese government, Treasurer Jim Chalmers, and Parliament as a whole to take two actions in response to ANZ’s plan to abandon Katoomba:

1. The Treasurer must revoke his approval of the ANZ-Suncorp merger, on the basis of ANZ breaching the conditions of that merger, until CEO Shayne Elliott spares Katoomba;
2. Parliament should establish the Expert Panel to examine the viability of establishing another public bank that the Senate inquiry into regional bank closures recommended, and the Expert Panel should hold its first meeting in Katoomba to survey the locals as to whether they would move their accounts to a new government bank.

**Thanks Shayne Elliott**

When *The Australian* reported last month that a post office bank was “back on Labor’s agenda”, which a government Minister has confirmed, ANZ and Shayne Elliott deserved some of the credit, Barwick added.

He noted that since taking over in 2017, Shayne Elliott:

* Closed around 330 branches, ripping away face-to-face services for hundreds of communities;
* Refused to pay $22 million out of ANZ’s $6.4 billion profit in 2018 to join Bank@Post, so ANZ customers without branches could at least access their accounts at local post offices;
* Refused to comply with the February 2023 request of the Senate Committee investigating bank branches closures to pause all closures for the duration of the inquiry;
* Arrogantly refuses to stop the impending closure of ANZ’s Katoomba branch on Wednesday, in defiance of Treasurer Jim Chalmers.

Barwick said: “Shayne Elliott’s sheer arrogance exemplifies the toxic attitude of the Big Four banks that Australians despise, and has moved the government to recognise it’s time to bring back a public competitor.

“Perhaps Australians should thank him, though, if his arrogance leads to a new government People’s Bank that forces his and the other Big Four banks to compete on service, and therefore improved service standards in the banking system.”

**Protest details**

Katoomba ANZ 3pm.

Contact Warren Ross 0423 085 209

Suncorp AGM Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre 9am

Jim Chalmers Electorate Office Logan Qld midday

Contact Jan Pukallus 0427 508 008