**All we need for Christmas is a … post office People’s Bank!**

The Australian Citizens Party is today calling on the Albanese government, the Opposition, and the whole Parliament to give the Australian people the Christmas gift they need—a post office People’s Bank that can break the power of the Big Four.

“The Big Four banks are a cartel, gouging Australians for their own profit, much of which goes overseas to foreign shareholders”, ACP Research Director Robert Barwick said today.

“They have driven up house prices by lending excessively for mortgages at the expense of business loans, which has driven up inflation, which in turn has driven up interest rates, which has smashed hundreds of thousands of Australian households.

“They have utter contempt for their customers, evidenced in their mass-closures of branches so they don’t have to provide an actual service to earn their profits.

“Their branch closures force vulnerable customers into digital danger online where they are the primary target for sophisticated scammers, and when those customers get scammed, predictably, the banks refuse to compensate them, unlike banks in other countries.

“They are waging a war on cash so they can make all transactions digital and take a cut of everything, and have the gall to try to charge customers for withdrawing their own money, as CBA wants to do.”

**Biting the hand that feeds them**

Robert Barwick observed that the Big Four banks are guaranteed by taxpayers, which makes their behaviour worse, because they are giving nothing back.

University of Wollongong Associate Professor Andy Schmulow calculates the guarantee has added $72 billion to the Big Four banks’ profits since 2004.

“It is not acceptable for banks to accept the *quid*—but not provide the *pro quo*,” Dr Schmulow said in the 16 December *Australian Financial Review*. “We have the most profitable banking industry in the world by [return on equity] and we have the right to tell the banks that they will provide branches in the bush. People realise, at a visceral level, there is something wrong when a banker says they don’t want to deal with cash because it is inconvenient. It’s like a doctor saying they don’t want to deal with someone because they are sick.” (Emphasis added.)

**People’s bank the only solution**

The ACP is saying that instead of the government using taxpayers’ money to prop up the Big Four banks, it should re-enter the banking sector directly and provide both competition for the Big Four and be a stabilising presence.

“The only way to bust up the cartel and break their power is by the government re-establishing a People’s Bank like the original Commonwealth Bank, which could operate through post offices and be the biggest retail bank in Australia overnight”, Barwick said.

The ACP lists all the benefits a post office Peoples Bank would bring to Australia:

• Guaranteed face-to-face banking services in every community;

• Guaranteed access to cash, and cash deposits and withdrawals;

• Fully secure deposits, as the bank is owned by the government;

• More banking profits remain in Australia to benefit the whole nation;

• Increased revenue for post offices to stop post office closures and maintain the postal network at 4,250 plus—more than all bank branches combined;

• As outlets for a Peoples Bank, post offices could also be transformed into the nation’s “front counter” for interfacing with most essential government services;

• The potential to expand into a new government insurance office, to make insurance available and affordable again;

• Better conduct standards in the banking system thanks to increased competition.

“The Senate inquiry into bank closures recommended the government consider this solution”, Barwick said. “It’s Christmas time—give Australians what they need.”