**Media Release**

**Citizens Party questions whether NACC will oil the revolving doors?**

The Australian Citizens Party has referred former federal finance minister Simon Birmingham to the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). On 18 August 2025, he will replace former Queensland premier Anna Bligh as CEO of the Australian Banking Association, one of the nation’s most powerful lobby groups.

In its complaint lodged on 30 July with the NACC, the Citizens Party states, “There is a case that Mr. Birmingham has improperly abused his position as a former minister of the Crown in order to advance his personal interests. In this instance, by assuming the leadership of the peak body advocating for an industry he was once entrusted with roles that contributed to its regulation and oversight.”

Says Robert Barwick, Research Director of the Citizens Party, “Immediately upon leaving parliament, Simon Birmingham took up the dual role of the South Australian Chair of the ANZ Bank and the bank’s Head of Asia Pacific Engagement.

“His appointment to lead one of the world’s most powerful banking cartels, extends a continuous run of more than 27 years where he has worked in public affairs for industry associations, as a political adviser, a parliamentarian and a senior cabinet minister.”

The Big Four banks, Commonwealth, ANZ, Westpac and National Australia Bank, command 75 percent of the Australian market. By price earnings ratio, shares in the market leader, Commonwealth Bank, are the most expensive globally. Trading at around 30 times earnings, they outstrip the market averages across the US and Europe, typically by around two and three times.

Says Barwick, “Banks in Australia are doing very nicely on their own, the Australian Banking Association is a proxy for five of the top ten ASX-listed companies. Meanwhile consumers, who enrich these banks, have no effective representation to protect their rights.” He pointed to the epidemic of branch closures by ABA-member banks, including Bendigo Bank currently, as an example of banks disregarding consumers.

As both finance minister and a cabinet minister in the Morrison government, Birmingham was privy to the highest-level government discussions in relation to the policing of Australia’s banks.

He served in a ministerial role in the Turnbull government that vehemently resisted the establishment of the Hayne Royal Commission into banking and financial services. The ABA’s response to the damning findings, handed down in February 2019, was weak. In a one-page statement, outgoing CEO Anna Bligh remarked, “The industry understands that many people are cynical about whether banks will really change, but don’t judge us by our words, judge us by our actions.”

Andy Schmulow, financial sector reform advocate, and Citizens Party NSW senate candidate, says, “The banks want to be judged by their actions? What of the ABA’s action in appointing another former senior politician to the role of cosying up to Canberra?

“It’s an insult to the Australian public that one of the key political players in helping the banks avoid public scrutiny is now lobbying for an industry that continues to abrogate any responsibility to consumers.”

In the case lodged with the NACC, the Citizens Party states Birmingham’s remarks, when he unexpectedly announced his retirement from the Senate, were disingenuous. He told the senate, “You can all be relieved to know that it [his departure] has nothing to do with lobbying, government relations or commentary.”

Says Schmulow, “Ten minutes after he exited the revolving door from Canberra he was South Australian Chair of the ANZ Group. That he’s now seamlessly transitioned into the role of boss of one of the nation’s peak lobby groups is anything but relief to ordinary Australians.”

-ends-

**Further Information
Robert Barwick 0409 014 265**