



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Western Australians to have their say on bank branch closures this week

The Senate inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia will hold hearings in WA this week, to give Western Australians the chance to have their say on the banks abandoning regional communities. On Tuesday the Senate inquiry will be in Carnamah, four hours north of Perth, where Westpac closed the town's only bank in March.

Carnamah is one of the towns that deserves credit for instigating the inquiry, because the town's fight to save its bank attracted media attention that was noticed by politicians in Canberra.

Carnamah is also an example of the deceptiveness of the banks: when the inquiry started, Westpac claimed it complied with the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's request that it pause any further branch closures, announcing it was putting eight branch closures on hold; however, Westpac secretly went ahead and closed seven other branches, including the Carnamah branch.

Now the people of Carnamah are taking a 230-kilometre round trip to visit the next closest bank branch.

If Westpac hadn't deceived the committee, the Carnamah branch would be saved now, as Westpac has since buckled under the scrutiny of the inquiry hearings and fully reversed, not just paused, its last eight planned branch closures.

Westpac's reversal of those eight branch closures proved that the branches are actually profitable, and that the banks are closing branches to achieve their digital cashless goals to extract maximum profits with minimum service, not because branches are unprofitable.

On Wednesday, the inquiry will be in Beverley, which has also lost all of its banks.

The people of Beverley have engaged heavily with the inquiry, making many submissions that the Senators could not ignore.

BankWest will be questioned at Beverley, where it should be asked to explain why its parent bank CBA has announced a three-year moratorium on any closures of CBA regional branches, but has not included BankWest's regional branches in WA in the moratorium.

Australian Citizens Party (ACP) Research Director Robert Barwick is in WA to attend the hearings. Barwick said: "This inquiry is very successful, and it shows what Parliament can do when politicians commit to represent the true interests of the people.

"Before this inquiry started, politicians acted powerless as banks abandoned regional towns *en masse*, disrupting regional economies all over Australia.

"But thanks to the Senators on this inquiry, led by Chair Matt Canavan and Senator Gerard Rennick, who first acted on the pleas of the towns losing their banks and instigated the inquiry, the banks have come under real scrutiny for the first time, and some like CBA and Westpac have been forced to change course.

"But the banks will only ever do the bare minimum, which is why it's crucial that the inquiry continues to increase pressure, which comes from the people having their say.

"The media should get along to these hearings to listen and report on what the people are saying."

Listen to Robert Barwick interviewed about the latest round of hearings on Perth's 6PR radio, [here](#).