

Andrew Jacobs

11 November 2023

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Subject: Concerns Regarding the Optus Network Outage and its Broader Economic Implications

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing to express my deep concerns about the recent Optus network outage on 8 November 2023, and its significant impact on the Australian society and economy. As an engaged citizen, I believe it is crucial to address the broader implications of such technological failures, particularly in the context of the growing dependency on electronic payment systems and the diminishing physical banking infrastructure.

The outage not only caused widespread inconvenience but also highlighted the vulnerability of our economy to such technological failures. Businesses, large and small, were left unable to transact, disrupting the economic activity and causing significant financial losses. This incident underscores the risk associated with our increasing reliance on digital services for essential transactions.

Furthermore, I wish to draw attention to the ongoing trend among major banks in Australia to close physical branches and ATM facilities. While this may augment their profit margins, it raises serious concerns about the resilience and inclusivity of our financial infrastructure. In events like the Optus outage, the absence of alternative physical banking options exacerbates the problem, leaving consumers and businesses stranded without access to their funds or means to transact.

In light of these events, I urge the Committee to consider the following recommendations in their inquiry:

1. **Robust Backup Systems:** Ensuring that telecommunication companies like Optus have robust and reliable backup systems to minimise the impact of such outages.
2. **Diverse Banking Options:** Encouraging banks to maintain a balance between digital and physical banking services, ensuring accessibility and reliability for all Australians, especially in remote and rural areas.
3. **Government Oversight and Support:** Strengthening government oversight on the reliability of essential services like telecommunications and banking, and ensuring prompt support and clear communication in case of outages.
4. **Consumer Protection and Fair Compensation:** Evaluating the compensation mechanisms for affected consumers and businesses, and ensuring fair and adequate reparation for the losses incurred.

I appreciate the Committee's initiative in investigating this matter and trust that my concerns will be duly considered. Ensuring the reliability of our telecommunication and banking infrastructure is paramount for the resilience and prosperity of our society.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Jacobs