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Gunning Shire

GUNNING SHIRE COUNCIL



All Correspondence: PO Box 42 Gunning NSW 2581

Email: gunning@interact.net.au • Telephone: (02) 4845 4100 • Facsimile: (02) 4845 1426

Dr Kathleen Dermody
Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Service
Room SG 64
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

10 September 2002

Dear Dr Dermody

Re/- Inquiry into the level of banking and financial services in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia

Many thanks for your letter dated 31 July 2002 requesting submissions into the Inquiry into the level of banking and financial services in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia.

To ensure the health of smaller communities a range of basic services is essential. Banking services are considered to be important base services for these communities. The National Australia Bank at Gunning closed on 9 August 2002.

Gunning Shire Council were successful in establishing a Rural Transaction Centre within the Gunning Post Office. Whilst this alleviates some banking issues, many other issues arise (eg, only \$3000.00 can be banked in any one day in cash at the RTC and third party cheques cannot be banked into an individuals account). Australia Post regulations and community needs clash in this respect.

Like many rural communities, the Gunning Shire community have a high dependency on private vehicle transport. The rural villages do not have access to public transport services that is enjoyed in metropolitan areas. Similarly community transport options do not fill the void due to eligibility criteria for using this service. When banking services are withdrawn there is not always the choice to commute to higher order centres.

This isolation reinforces the need for such services to be provided in small communities such as Gunning. However, this does not mean that every community must have a branch of every bank. A place in which banking and financial transactions can take place would be of assistance in all village areas.



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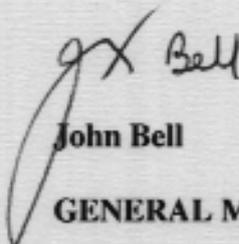
Electronic options are not always available or reliable. It would also appear that the uptake of online new technology is lower in rural and regional communities and within certain demographic categories. For example, the number of personal computers and access to the Internet appears to be lower in rural and regional areas than in metropolitan centres due in part to differentials in disposable income levels.

Electronic options also fail to recognise the importance of the social interaction attached to these exchanges. Personal contact should not be underestimated as part of these transactions particularly for sections of the population such as the elderly.

Facilities and options that provide access to banking with personal services will assist in maintaining the health of smaller rural communities and regions. This could be as simple as maintaining a single branch which provides shared banking facilities.

Council is therefore extremely supportive of the Inquiry exploring options that will assist in delivering a balance between access to banking and personal service.

Yours faithfully


John Bell

GENERAL MANAGER