



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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AUSTRALIA POST

Mr WILSON (Ferny Grove—ALP) (11.16 p.m.): Bank closures are now a common occurrence, unfortunately and regrettably. Banks have abandoned any sense of community service or obligation and have absolutely embraced as their sole motive the making of a profit. Australia Post now sadly seems to be following in the footsteps of the four big banks. How astonished I was recently to read on the front page of the local Hills Echo newspaper that Ferny Hills was to lose its post office. Why was I astonished? Over a period of eight or so months, strong representations have been made by me, Pine Rivers Shire Council and the Federal member for Dickson, Cheryl Kernot, to Australia Post, opposing the closure of this post office.

Local businesses and residents have raised this issue time and time again. Early this year, when I first became aware of this issue, I consulted with the streetscape committee at Ferny Hills and with other businesses and residents. Clearly they were of the view that this post office should not be closed. I made representations to Australia Post—to a Ms Goldstiver—and there was some correspondence to-and-fro between us.

The setting is as follows. A \$40m shopping centre is being opened at the other end of this geographical area, at a place called Settlement Road, on the way from Keperra to the Gap. It is called the Great Western Supercentre. Australia Post has made a unilateral decision that it will open a new franchise there. But instead of maintaining the franchise in Ferny Hills to the north-west and servicing the community there, it has decided to close it.

The issue is not whether the new area around the Great Western Supercentre should be serviced by a new franchise but whether Australia Post should continue with the post office in Ferny Hills. They are relatively remote geographical areas. They are essentially two different market areas. There would be approximately 2,000 households in the Ferny Hills area, many of which would use the Ferny Hills Post Office. Many of the people living in the Samford Valley would also use the Ferny Hills Post Office.

Australia Post seems to have made a decision that it will draw a circle around a number of suburbs in the north-western sector of Brisbane and the Hills area of Pine Rivers and say that that is one market area and it will not increase the total number of franchises in that area and that to open a new post office over on Settlement Road it must close the post office at Ferny Hills.

Why should I be astonished about the lack of consultation? Why? Because early this year, in response to my representations on behalf of the local community, Australia Post, through Sue Goldstiver, said that there would be consultation about the impacts of any such decision were they to make it! But no survey of business has been conducted, or of community needs in the area, or of the elderly, or those without transport, or the impact on local businesses. The businesses in Ferny Way have just spent many, many dollars upgrading and refurbishing their premises. It is now a very smart, attractive shopping centre area.

Australia Post is afraid to confront the issues. It proposed a meeting with me on Monday night and did not front. There has been shabby behaviour by it on that occasion and throughout on this issue. The challenge to Australia Post is to suspend the decision it has made and to undertake proper consultation with the whole local community. Do a letterbox drop, like any other proper marketing exercise; call a public meeting; confront the streetscape committee and invite it to participate in a public

meeting; do a proper survey of local businesses to determine what the real community need is. I think Australia Post will find that Ferny Hills wants to keep its post office.

People complain from time to time about the limited parking at Ferny Hills, but there has been a retail outlet there for many, many years, and that problem has not detracted too seriously from patronage of that outlet. The nearby post offices will not be able to cope with the extra demand. Australia Post: start serving the local community.
