



Speech by

**BONNY BARRY**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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Hansard 6 November 2002

### **AUSTRALIA POST**

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (12.23 p.m.): The saying 'never give up and never give in' was in my view tailor made for the efforts and feelings of the people of Strathpine who are seeking to save their post office from closure. Honourable members will recall that I spoke in the House last May 2001 about the proposed closure of the Gympie Road federal government owned Australia Post office. It was victim to the mantra of the record-profit-making Australia Post: profits before people.

The post office, located on Gympie Road, was deemed to be inefficient by Australia Post. Inefficient for who? Certainly not for the many older citizens of Strathpine who access the post office by foot, not for the many community groups who use the post office for the convenience of their volunteers, not for the disabled citizens who use the post office for ease of access and not for the businesses that use the post office to avoid the hassle of having to enter the major car park of the nearby shopping mall. Inefficient for who, I ask? For the accountants of Australia Post, who callously declare that once a post office is closed the inconvenience to customers is minimised by them simply making a trek several kilometres down the road to the nearest post office.

This post office's continued operation has had a chequered history. Although it has been kept open by the determination of its citizens, Australia Post and the federal government are not off the hook. Honourable members will recall that the residents of Strathpine celebrated a victory soon after I spoke in parliament last year, when Australia Post declared that the post office would remain open. Why? Well, it seemed that in the lead-up to the federal election the federal minister responsible for Australia Post, Senator Alston, had received a call from the would-be candidate and now federal member for Dickson, Peter Dutton. Victory was declared in the face of a federal election campaign and the post office remained open for further consultation.

I reminded Australia Post in the House that the residents of Strathpine and I would be watching them, and watch them we have. Australia Post has attempted several times since the federal election to close the post office. That is despite many alternatives being proposed to Australia Post by local residents, including the possibility of a licensed post office. Local property manager Ray King advised me that Australia Post had rejected an offer of more than a quarter of a million dollars for a licence in Strathpine. Why? Because Australia Post says that there are too many post offices in Strathpine. If there are too many post offices, why did Australia Post expand the large post office in the local area and make it even bigger, in only the last two years? Because it was always the intention of Australia Post to close the Gympie Road post office.

It would appear that the previous reprieves offered to Strathpine residents to keep their post office open were nothing more than a cynical exploitation of the election environment by the federal minister responsible for Australia Post, Senator Alston. The minister has kept the residents of Strathpine dangling on a string. The only thing that makes him keep the post office open is the committed residents in Strathpine rising in protest, making his local federal MP uncomfortable.

In the latest attack on and proposed closure of our post office, resident Maud Stretton rang Senator Alston's office and asked why the post office was being closed, only to be told that the senator had no control over the Queensland branch of Australia Post. Maybe Senator Alston or his office have forgotten that he is the responsible minister for Australia Post and that if a federal government owned post office can be kept open during an election campaign then it can be kept open for good when it is to the benefit of the people of Strathpine.

The people of Aspley electorate lost a branch of the National Bank in the lead-up to the federal election last year. We were reassured by the bank—there was silence from the local federal member for Petrie—that the bank's services would be undertaken by guess who? Australia Post. The customers of that bank, who were basically 600 residents from retirement villages, were the victims of corporate greed.

The thought that our vital services should be considered safe in the hands of Australia Post is a joke. Australia Post clearly offers no guaranteed services to its customers, and the federal government and the minister clearly cannot remember that they have a responsibility to the citizens who use federal government post offices. I jog Senator Alston's memory and ask him to remind Australia Post that it has a job; that is, to help people post letters, not just to help itself to increased profits. The people of Strathpine are watching Australia Post, the federal government and its local federal member. Leave our post office alone.