



Speech By  
**Dale Last**


**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Burdekin Electorate, Banking Services

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.19 pm): I rise to inform the House of a serious threat to rural towns throughout regional Queensland and, more specifically, within my electorate of Burdekin. In recent years bank branches in regional Queensland have closed at an alarming rate, leaving towns such as Collinsville and Moranbah with one bank branch and centres such as Clermont, Glenden, Middlemount and Dysart without a single bank branch. To ensure the long-term viability of large areas of regional Queensland, we must ensure that bank branches are maintained, or established, in areas where there are currently limited or no banking facilities. In my recent submission I called on the federal banking royal commission to recommend legislation be implemented to force banks to provide services to regional Queensland if they will not do so voluntarily.

It is simply not acceptable that large portions of Australia are left unserved by the banking industry. In 2018 it is not acceptable that entire communities can be left for periods without access to their money. It is not acceptable that good-willed citizens can be asked to travel hundreds of kilometres to conduct banking for a community group and, above all, it is not acceptable that the banking industry can earn profits in areas where there is little to no option for competition. Today the closure of bank branches in regional Queensland is causing increased angst for farmers affected by drought. It is hampering economic development and it is causing financial exclusion which can lead to increased vulnerability to financial stress.

In the broader community we are seeing added pressure on community groups that are already struggling. The activities of these groups are restricted or severely affected by the lack of bank branches, leaving community minded individuals to travel considerable distances to obtain basic banking services, often at their own expense. We are seeing volunteers refusing to take up executive positions within community organisations due to the need to transport large amounts of cash. Today constituents of mine face restrictions on how much money they can withdraw and even deposit. They are paying up to \$3 per transaction and travelling an average of 206 kilometres to access a bank branch.

As you would understand, Mr Speaker, if my constituent needs to spend two hours driving to do their banking, it is highly likely that they will also do their shopping in the same trip. This takes revenue from shops in smaller areas and can lead to a domino effect of closures of other services such as supermarkets. Unfortunately, community banks and credit unions are not viable alternatives. Despite the lack of internet access, the 'big four' simply advise constituents to use online services or the applicable app. We cannot stand by and watch families relocate and small towns die. If we truly support rural and regional areas, we must stand side by side with Queenslanders and ensure the banking services they need are available.