




Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Gatton, Westpac Branch

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (7.13 pm): In early February we were advised by the Westpac bank that the Gatton Westpac was going to close. Fortunately, our community rallied and we were able to turn that around and we have some great news. When that announcement was made, the vulnerable in our community and all of those many members who use the Westpac bank were going to have to travel 35 minutes to the nearest bank. There are 20 banks in Brisbane, and if one of those were to close I am sure it would have been a lot less inconvenient for those people.

When we heard that news, many of the community and businesses affected reached out to me, Scott Buchholz the federal member as well as the local council. Together we put on a united front and made some really significant representations to the Westpac bank about the economic boom that is happening through the Lockyer. We have population growth there, and this announcement by the Westpac bank was premature and not well informed. We were able to tell Westpac that there has been a new Bunnings created, that the Catholic Church are opening a high school and that a new Mitre 10 has opened in Gatton. There is great economic growth there. Even a pet store has opened in the main street, and there are many other professional services. Fortunately, with the representation of Scott and Tanya, we have been able to turn that decision around, and earlier this week the Westpac bank advised us that they have changed their decision and they are going to keep that Westpac bank open.

Things happen in our community when any of those services are taken away. This Westpac branch has a great spot in the main street of the town in a very significant position, and it would have been a very dark position on the landscape if they had left. Importantly, that closure would have also affected five families. Five people would have lost their job, including four full-time-equivalent employees. When corporate Australia does not get the right information and makes premature economic rational decisions without considering the growth that is happening in our areas, then it is very badly informed.

I wrote directly to Westpac CEO Peter King and chair John McFarlane after hearing this and making those representations. I thank them for listening to us. I thank Richard Shields, the government relations manager at Westpac, for listening to us and taking our community's voices forward. On behalf of the Lockyer electorate and the Gatton community in particular, thank you. Those who use the bank will not have to travel 35 minutes. We are going to be able to keep our business in town and keep families in town. I hope more businesses and more banks listen to the Westpac example and stay in regional Queensland.