



LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTIONAL SUMMIT

A SPECIAL NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Constitutional Recognition of Local Government Summit Declaration

Whereas:

- **Local** government existed in Australia prior to Federation;
- **Local** government contributes more than 2 per cent of economic activity to GDP, through the employment of over 168,000 people, the custodianship of more than \$200 billion of assets and the annual expenditure of over \$23 billion on the services and infrastructure that allows Australian communities to develop and grow; and
- **The** role of local government in the governance of the Australian Federation has been recognised by participation on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

We the Mayors, Shire Presidents, Councillors and Aldermen, who are:

- **Democratically** elected by the Australian people to councils throughout the Commonwealth; and
- **In** attendance at this Local Government Constitutional Summit – A Special National General Assembly

Now declare our commitment to achieve the recognition of local government as the third sphere of government in the paramount political document of the Australian Federation – the Australian Constitution.

We :

- **Applaud** the commitment of the Rudd Labor Government to constitutional recognition, and the Australian Labor Party and Coalition commitment to participate in the development of a referendum proposal on the constitutional recognition of local government; and
- **Commend** the spirit of bipartisanship demonstrated by the passing of the Federal Parliamentary Resolution in 2006 recognising the importance of local government to our nation and our system of Australian Government.

Building on these developments and, whilst recognising the continuing importance of maintaining accountability and legislative frameworks for local government established by State and Territory Parliaments, we now declare our belief that constitutional recognition will assist the process of reforming the Australian Federation by:

- **Correcting** the historical oversight of not recognising in Australia's paramount political document the level of government that is closest to the people;
- **Acting** as a driver for local government participants to act in a transparent, fair and accountable manner;

- **Reinforcing** the belief that local decision-making will ensure the provision of services and infrastructure that best meet local needs;
- **Reaffirming** the concept that individuals and communities have the right to engage in the democratic processes of their local government area;
- **Advancing** the relationship between all three spheres of government within the Australian Federation; and
- **Establishing** a clear capacity for the Commonwealth to provide direct funding to local government, so as to improve or provide the infrastructure and services to meet the legitimate expectations of all Australians, whilst ensuring the sustainability of the local government sector.

We believe that to ensure the quality of planning and delivery of services and infrastructure provided to all Australians, and the ongoing sustainability of local government, any constitutional amendment put to the people in a referendum by the Australian Parliament (which could include the insertion of a preamble, an amendment to the current provisions or the insertion of a new Chapter) should reflect the following principles:

- The Australian people should be represented in the community by democratically elected and accountable local government representatives;
- The power of the Commonwealth to provide direct funding to local government should be explicitly recognised; and
- If a new preamble is proposed, it should ensure that local government is recognised as one of the components making up the modern Australian Federation.

We call on the Australian Local Government Association, the State and Territory Associations and the councils of Australia to work with the:

- **Parliaments of Australia;**
- **Governments of Australia;**
- **Political Parties of Australia;**
- **The Australian Council of Local Government;**

and, most importantly, the

- **People of Australia.**

So as to create and leave a stronger nation for future generations.

DATED this 11th Day of December 2008

Cr Geoff Lake
On behalf of the Delegates
Local Government Constitutional Summit