



22 November 2012

Dear Mayor, Councillors and CEO

**Update on constitutional recognition, together with copies of the
*Case for Change***

Further to my letter of 9 November on the establishment of a Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government I am writing with additional details on the parliamentary committee and to again urge all councils to make a submission to the inquiry, as these are critically important in convincing the committee of the level of support within local government and to counter submissions lodged which might oppose constitutional recognition. We need the support of all councils across Australia to present a strong and unified voice to the committee. I thank those councils which have already prepared and lodged submissions.

The Joint Committee has taken longer than anticipated to be established and to confirm its full membership, and at the time of writing this letter to you, the committee website is not yet operational. However, the Committee has advised the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and state and territory associations of its terms of reference and asked for these to be disseminated to interested parties. It has also flagged the possibility of holding a public hearing at short notice to facilitate the December timeframe specified in the resolution of appointment. The time taken to establish the committee may have implications for the reporting dates, as the resolution requests an interim report in December 2012 and a final report by the end of February 2013.

Although the Committee has not yet called for submissions, councils do not need to wait for this call and can use the key points in my last letter as a guide for submissions. For your convenience, I am again including the key points we ask your council to include in your submission:

- ◆ Reinforce that your council supports financial recognition. Most councils have already passed resolutions supporting financial recognition. You could refer to the date that this resolution was passed by council (a new council resolution is not necessary and submissions should be lodged quickly to meet the Committee's timeframe);
- ◆ Reinforce that your council supports the Federal Government having the power to be able to provide funding directly to local government where this is in the national interest;
- ◆ Reinforce that your council needs certainty of funding so that programs like Roads to Recovery can continue;
- ◆ Reinforce that your council supports an amendment to Section 96 of the Constitution so that it would read: "Parliament may grant financial assistance to any state **or local government body formed by or under a law of a state or territory**";
- ◆ Reinforce that bi-partisan support is an essential precondition if a referendum is to have the best chance of success;
- ◆ Reinforce that your council supports the referendum being held at a time which maximises its chance of success;

- ◆ Reinforce that your council supports a publicly funded national education and awareness campaign to inform the public about the Constitution, how to change it, and about the question being asked before the referendum. An informed voter is more likely to cast an informed vote, which is based on facts rather than misinformation.

A committee secretariat has been established and councils can send their submissions to:

Mr Glenn Worthington
Secretary
Joint Select Committee on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601
(via email to jsclg@aph.gov.au)

The committee prefers to receive submissions in electronic format, where possible.

Further information on the inquiry can be obtained from either the Committee Secretary, Glenn Worthington on (02) 6277 4044, or from the Inquiry Secretary Thomas Gregory on (02) 6277 2332 (direct line), or the committee website when operational.

The Case for Change

To assist councils with submissions and as a resource when speaking to constituents, the media and in preparing mayoral columns and articles for the local paper, I am enclosing 10 copies of a document produced by ALGA *The Case for Change: Why Local Government needs to be in the Australian Constitution*.

The Case for Change is also available on ALGA's dedicated constitutional website <http://www.councilreferendum.com.au> under the "council resources" tab. Further hard copies of the report are available to councils on request from ALGA.

Once you've made a submission, promote your submission and the benefits constitutional recognition will have in your local community. The *Case for Change* contains facts, statistics and answers to questions, which can be used to convey the message within your communities and in discussions with local media.

Our weekly electronic newsletter *ALGA News* features regular stories and my President's column on progress and developments on constitutional recognition. I urge all councillors to take up the free subscription to *ALGA News*, via the website at www.alga.asn.au, so you receive the latest information on our campaign.

Again, I stress the importance of each council making a submission to the committee to demonstrate their support for the campaign. I will continue to keep you updated.

Yours sincerely



Mayor Felicity-ann Lewis
President