



## **Local government ramps up campaign effort as inquiry recommends 2013 referendum**

7 March, 2013

In a win for local government, the parliamentary committee charged with investigating the likelihood of Australians voting 'yes' in a 2013 referendum to recognise local government in the Constitution has today recommended that a referendum on the issue be put to voters at this year's federal election.

For more than five years, the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has been campaigning for constitutional recognition of local government to ensure that local government bodies are recognised as legitimate recipients of direct federal funding.

"The Joint Select Committee's key finding that a referendum should be held in September vindicates ALGA's long-held position. ALGA has consistently argued that recognition in the Constitution is needed to protect important funding for local projects and provide councils with the certainty that funding for local projects can continue without claims of constitutional invalidity," ALGA President Felicity-ann Lewis said.

"We welcome the Committee's recommendation that the Commonwealth begin all necessary preparatory activities to ensure a successful outcome for a referendum on financial recognition in 2013 and we call on the Federal Government to implement the necessary legislation and provide public funding to support a campaign on the issue of constitutional recognition of local government.

"Much has been done by ALGA to prepare for a referendum announcement by the Australian Government.

"Several elements of our campaign plan require the commitment of considerable financial expenditure and the allocation of resources from our state associations and of course must therefore await a final government decision.

"ALGA and its state associations have committed to provide millions of dollars to campaign for the referendum and it is vital that public funding is also made available.

"Constitutional change can only be achieved through a successful referendum.

"ALGA, with the help of councils across Australia, will be running a campaign to convince Australians to vote 'yes' to constitutional recognition of local government if a referendum proceeds in September."

ALGA is seeking 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 on such terms and conditions as the Parliament sees fit."

### **Media enquiries:**

**Megan Magill, Director Public Affairs, Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) 0418 415 649**