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Mr Thomas Gregory
Committee Secretary
Joint Selected Committee on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Gregory

Re: Alexandrina Council Support for Constitutional Recognition of Local Government

On behalf of Alexandrina Council I thank you once again for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate. We welcome the Australian Government commitment to holding a referendum on this issue and appreciate the work of the expert panel in exploring the views of Australians, including local government bodies such as our own.

Alexandrina Council is a thriving community made up of more than 23,000 people, across an area of 1,800 square kilometres on the picturesque Fleurieu Peninsula south of Adelaide. The area is supported by diverse industries including tourism, viticulture, general farming and dairying, fruit production, manufacturing, engineering and boat building, and is close enough to Adelaide to make it an easily accessible and desirable holiday and tourist destination.

With respect to the possible changes to the Australian Constitution, Alexandrina Council supports the financial recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution. At its Council meetings of 21 February 2011 and 17 October 2011, Council declared, resolved and fully endorsed its support for amendments that will result in the financial recognition of Local Government as a priority, so that the Federal Government has the power to fund Local Government directly.

In its written submission to the *Expert Panel on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government* dated 17 October 2011, Council identified its preference for 'symbolic' recognition of Local Government in the Preamble of the Australian Constitution (should it be proposed).

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Alexandrina Council supports an amendment to Section 96 of the Constitution to read:

“Parliament may grant financial assistance to any State or Local Government body formed by or under a law of State or Territory”.

This amendment would validate programs such as Roads to Recovery without creating broader capacity for the Commonwealth to legislate about Local Government. Council values the relationship it has with the South Australian Government but is aware State funding for Councils in South Australia is the lowest per capita in the nation.

Council supports a referendum being held at a time most likely to achieve a successful result. The current support from all political parties and independents in the Federal Parliament is an important factor in giving a referendum the best chance of success. Further, we commit to raising awareness amongst our own community of the referendum however we recommend and support a publically funded education and awareness campaign to support an informed vote in the community.

As a member of the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGASA) we support the work of the LGASA and of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in representing Local Government on this issue.

Kind regards

Kym McHugh
Mayor

CC: Mr Peter Dinning, Chief Executive, Alexandrina Council; Ms Wendy Campana, Chief Executive, Local Government Association of South Australia; Mayor Felicity –ann Lewis, President, Australian Local Government Association.