



Dear Committee Secretary,

The following are my own opinions on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

1. Local Government is corrupt.

While I agree this is a sweeping generalisation and therefore untrue, it is true in many cases. At the very least the lack of care and attention directed toward LG means that it frequently gets away with the most appalling excesses. Indeed in my own State, Victoria, it is only when those excesses reach the point institutionalised and organised crime that the police step in.

We have a long proud history in Victoria of local councils being suspended and having administrators appointed because of corruption and/or mismanagement (example Brimbank Council (VIC), City of Canning (WA)).

2. Local Government is too small.

When you look at the issues facing this country, or even a region within our nation, we are faced with the interconnected of those issues. LG frequently, usually, can only deal with a small part of a larger issue, and usually does so without regard for its neighbour's approach. Take waterways as an example. A river or even a creek is likely to pass through more than one LG area and therefore is not managed as it should be. The same is true of waste disposal, with the LGA that contain the actual site charging other councils for access or not managing the waste appropriately (example City of Casey, Brookland Greens estate).

3. Less and better government, not more

There is little disagreement in this nation that we could stand to lose a level of government. The attachment by many to "grassroots democracy" as represented by local government quickly fades after a person attends a few council meetings. They are petty, secretive affairs with most of the decision making happening outside the chamber and away from the eyes of community. There is precious little scrutiny at this lowest level of government.

4. It is a waste of money

This is precisely what the amendment seeks to achieve, wasting money on local government. It is already a huge sink hole into which millions are poured for little result. Beyond the few services that councils actually provide, all of which could be provided more efficiently if they took advantage of economies of scale, local government spends much too much of its money on junkets. Without the wages of councillors and staff, the services that are provided by councils could be provided by the various States and Territories at reduced cost. Libraries could be part of a national system without ridiculous inter-library transfer fees for example. Waste could be managed on a State-wide or nation-wide basis.

In short I recommend the exact opposite of the proposed amendment, that we do away with local government.

Yours

Les Mallett