



MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Parliament House
State Square
Darwin NT 0800
minister.giles@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146
Darwin NT 0801
Telephone: 08 8928 6567
Facsimile: 08 8928 6621

Mr Glenn Worthington
Secretary
Joint Select Committee on the Constitutional Reform of Local Government
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Worthington

Thank you for your email of 4 December 2012 to the Hon Terry Mills MLA, Chief Minister, regarding the inquiry into the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government. The Northern Territory Government (NTG) welcomes this opportunity and will provide a submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee into Constitutional Recognition of Local Government. The Chief Minister has forwarded your correspondence to me to respond as the Minister responsible for Local Government.

The NTG acknowledges the position of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) that a successful constitutional referendum would further empower the Commonwealth to directly fund local government and improve its ability to support local governments in meeting the needs of local communities.

While Constitutional Recognition for Local Government is conditionally supported by the NTG it still holds some concerns in regard to future funding arrangements and the possible impact on the powers, capacity and function of the Territory Parliament.

Local government is a critical element in Australia's system of government and, in recent times, its role has widened significantly with growing responsibilities in regional development and human services. In the Northern Territory, local government plays a central role in the provision of a wide range of services to remote Aboriginal communities and in leading regional representation and governance.

Further, local government is increasingly being asked to contribute to the implementation of national policy agendas and support public policy development in addition to its role in service delivery at the regional and local levels. In the Northern Territory, local government has played a key role in the management and delivery of key Australian Government initiatives, such as those under the NT Emergency Response ("the Intervention"), the Stronger Futures in the NT and the Remote Housing Reforms under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.

Local government is a legislative responsibility of the States and Territories and is recognised in the Constitution of each State. This position is acknowledged by ALGA which is a member of the Council of Australian Governments.

It is important that all levels of government recognise the need to take a cooperative approach to the changing allocation of responsibilities and resources as our system of government matures. It is also essential that governments work constructively to minimise duplication and waste and to improve the certainty and sustainability of Local Government.

The NTG acknowledges the implications and potential negative impact that the High Court challenges against direct funding by the Federal Government to bodies other than State Governments may engender. The NTG believes that constitutional recognition for Local Government would remove the current uncertainty in regards to direct funding programs, such as the highly successful Roads to Recovery Program.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to make submission to the inquiry. I will ensure that the views of the Northern Territory Government are provided to the Committee in advance of the 15 February 2013 deadline.

Yours sincerely

ADAM GILES
30-01-2013