



Office of The Mayor



Wednesday, 16th January 2013

Submission Number: 156
Date Received: 21/01/2013

Mr Glenn Worthington
Secretary
Joint Select Committee on the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government
PO Box 6021 Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Worthington,

I am advised that the Joint Select Committee has been established to inquire into and report on the finding of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

This Council is not scheduled to meet in time to formally consider and prepare a submission to the Committee by 15 February. I have therefore consulted with my colleagues individually in preparation of this submission and this letter reflects the views of all of the Councillors at Hobsons Bay City Council.

The findings of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government have provided a pragmatic focus for the form of such recognition. We agree that local government, through programs such as Nation Building Roads to Recovery program, the Regional Development Australia Fund and the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, is the natural instrument for implementation of federal government policy. The Expert Panel has identified instances where the effectiveness of such programs will only be diluted by the insertion of state governments into the allocation and approvals processes.

Of course local government is a creation of the respective state governments, and we note with some regret that the Expert Panel found that democratic recognition of Local Government did not enjoy broad support as a referendum question. However we do support the amendment of the constitution to provide financial recognition for local government, in a form that will enable the funding of programs, such as those described above, to continue where this is in the national interest. In this context we also submit that local governments, and the communities we serve, require a degree of certainty over the funding of such programs to ensure that program delivery can continue at the local level.

This Council has over a significant period supported the case for constitutional recognition of local government. My Councillor colleagues at Hobsons Bay have advised me that this support has not wavered and we actively commend moves to submit a question on the financial recognition of local government to referendum. We therefore support 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 a state or territory".

We also consider that if the above proposal is to be put to referendum, it must only occur in circumstances which provide a reasonable prospect of success. Therefore we support the position of the Australian Local Government Association in further submitting that:-

- bi-partisan support is an essential precondition for any referendum to have a reasonable chance of success;
- the referendum should be held at a time which maximises its chance of success; and
- a publicly funded national education and awareness campaign should be conducted about the Constitution, how to change it and the question being asked at referendum.

Should any of the above comment require further clarification I may be contacted on

Yours faithfully

Cr Angela Altair
Mayor