

TATIARA DISTRICT COUNCIL

29th November 2012

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File 10/3/4

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

Dear Mr Gregory

**Re: Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of
Local Government**

The Tatiara District Council is located on the main Adelaide to Melbourne Highway in the Upper South East of South Australia. We have a relatively large area, a population of 6,600 people with the two main towns being Bordertown and Keith. The Council is democratically elected under the Local Government Act 1999 (SA) to represent and provide infrastructure and services to the local community.

At council's March 2011 meeting the following resolution was carried unanimously:

that Tatiara District Council:

1. *Declares its support for:*
 - a) *Financial recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution so that the Federal Government has the power to fund local government directly*
 - b) *The inclusion of local government in any new Preamble to the Constitution if one is proposed*
2. *Calls on all political parties to support a referendum by 2013 to change the constitution to achieve this recognition*

This Council area relies on heavily on the \$411,000 per year Federal funding for roads under the Roads to Recovery program and the Council is proud to have supported nation building under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. Both of these programs have delivered funding to our community efficiently and effectively through direct transfer from the Commonwealth.

Principal Office
43 Woolshed Street
P.O. Box 346
Bordertown, S.A. 5268

Phone: (08) 8752 1044
Fax: (08) 8752 1442

Email: office@tatiara.sa.gov.au
Website: www.tatiara.sa.gov.au

Sub-Office
34 Hender Street
P.O. Box 65
Keith, S.A. 5267

Phone: (08) 8755 3347
Fax: (08) 8755 3354

Recent High Court judgments have raised considerable uncertainty regarding direct funding to Councils from the Australian Government. This uncertainty is creating a lack of confidence in the sorts of partnerships which Councils can forge with the Commonwealth.

This Council supports 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."

This amendment would validate programs such as Roads to Recovery without creating any broader capacity for the Commonwealth to legislate about Local Government. Council values the relationship it has with the SA Government but is aware State funding for Councils in SA 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.

Another key factor in the success of a referendum is likely to be the level of understanding in the community about the Australian Constitution, the role it plays in society today and how it can be amended. Council supports a publicly funded national education and awareness campaign to support an informed vote in the community.

Finally Council is a member of the Local Government Association of SA and supports its work and that of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in representing Local Government on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

Robert Harkness
Chief Executive Officer