

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL
RECOGNITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT***Chair: Ms Michelle Rowland MP*

Committee recommends 2013 referendum on funding

The final report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government was presented today in Canberra. The Committee has recommended that the Australian people be asked to vote on a referendum question on 14 September 2013, the day of the federal election.

The Committee's recommendation follows from its major finding, that:

- there is a strong case for recognition;
- lessons from the history of referenda support a 2013 referendum;
- the prospects for success are good, due to existing bipartisan support at the federal level and the readiness of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and local governments to campaign in support of change;
- the prospects for success will rely on the strong commitment and campaigning by ALGA and its member bodies; and
- the prospects for success will be greatly improved by the support of state governments.

If a referendum is held, Australians would be able to exercise their right to amend the Australian Constitution. The proposed amendment would guarantee the ability of the Commonwealth Government to continue to directly fund essential community infrastructure, such as building and upgrading regional roads, through programs like *Roads to Recovery*.

'Local government bodies in the 21st century take responsibility for much more than "roads, rates and rubbish" and local communities rely on this high level of service being maintained,' said Committee Chair Michelle Rowland MP.

'The Committee has carefully considered the difficult question of "the likelihood of success" of a proposed referendum, and the Committee's major finding reflects the evidence that we received during the inquiry. We have found that the referendum has a good prospect of success, and we note that the support of state governments would greatly improve that prospect,' Ms Rowland said. 'Based on this finding, the Committee believes that this referendum should go ahead in 2013.'

The Committee found that there is strong support for this change from all sides of politics at the federal level; from constitutional experts; peak bodies such as the Australian Local Government Association; local government bodies and from several state governments. The Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has commenced negotiations to secure the support of the majority of state and territory governments for the referendum.

A national civics education program, created under the guidance of a panel of referendum experts and key public figures, would contribute to the success of the referendum.

The full report is available on the Committee's

website: [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/House of Representatives Committees?url=jsclg/localgovt/finalreport.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_Representatives_Committees?url=jsclg/localgovt/finalreport.htm)

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