



From the Mayor's Office
Karen Williams
Mayor of Redland City

Submission Number: 127
Date Received: 11/01/2013



8 January 2013

Our Ref: KW: LW:ds:kl

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

Dear Sir,

On behalf of Redland City Council I am delighted to make this submission confirming our strong support for the recognition of local government in the Constitution of Australia.

Local communities have come to depend on Commonwealth financial support in recent years to provide essential infrastructure and services through successful programs such as roads to recovery, the regional and local community infrastructure program and the local government reform fund. In addition, the Commonwealth provides vital direct funding to local government to help communities recovering from disasters.

It is of significant benefit to local government, and in turn local communities, that this funding is provided quickly and directly without the need for unnecessary double handling via state governments.

The 2009 High Court decision in the case of *Pape v The Commissioner for Taxation* has placed a serious question mark over the ongoing validity of Commonwealth financial assistance and it is now essential that constitutional reform is enacted so that legal barriers are removed and communities can once again have certainty in this area.

Council passed a resolution at its meeting in March 2011 that read (in part) as follows;

That Council resolve to declare its support for financial recognition of local government in the Australian Constitution so that Federal Government has the power to fund local government directly.

Council further resolved unanimously at its final meeting for 2012, on 19 December, "to endorse the attached submission to the Commonwealth Joint Select Committee on the Constitutional recognition of Local Government expressing our strong support for recognition of local government in the Constitution of Australia".

Council supports an amendment to Section 96 of the Constitution along these lines and pledges to continue our strong support of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and the Local Government Association of QLD (LGAQ) in promoting this matter on behalf of all local governments.

Redland City Council
ABN 86 058 929 428

Cnr Bloomfield & Middle Sts.
Cleveland Qld 4163

PO Box 21,
Cleveland Qld 4163

Telephone 07 3829 8623
Facsimile 07 3829 8781

To this end, Council notes that one of the roles of the Joint Select Committee is to advise Government on the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome in a referendum. In this regard I note the concerted effort that local government has made as an industry since ALGA's constitutional summit in December 2008 where resolutions supporting this cause were unanimously carried by all members present.

In Council's view it will be vital for local communities to get behind any referendum on this question through education of our community, commitment of funding to promotional campaigns etc. In discussing this matter with colleagues throughout QLD and Australia I am confident that as an industry local government is prepared to continue with endeavours in these areas.

Redland City Council has already made a financial contribution to an LGAQ marketing campaign and in July this year we were delighted to co-host a community information session on this matter with the Redlands Chapter of the University of the Third Age with ALGA assisting by providing a constitutional lawyer to address over 120 attendees.

This forum provided an excellent understanding of the key issues for local community members and helped to promote this issue in our City. These efforts will be stepped up in the months leading up to a referendum and I am sure this will be the case across QLD and Australia.

Council urges the Joint Select Committee to recognise the commitment of local government to supporting this matter along with the vital bi-partisan support pledged by both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. We feel very strongly that this referendum can be successful in achieving an important reform that will benefit all communities.

Yours sincerely

Cr Karen Williams
Mayor of Redland City