



(REPS)

From: Ray Campling
Sent: Thursday, 3 January 2013 2:07 PM
To: Committee, JSCLG (REPS)
Cc:
Subject: CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Good afternoon Mr Worthington,

I hope that you and your family had a particularly enjoyable, rewarding and safe festive season and that you are having a most positive start to 2013?

The following represents Yarriambiack Shire Council's submission in regard to Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Firstly, Council at its meeting on Wednesday September 14th, 2011 resolved the following motion;-

That Council:-

1. Declares its support for financial recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution so that the Federal Government has the power to fund Local Government directly;
2. Includes Local Government in any preamble to the Constitution if one is proposed; and
3. Requests all political parties to support a referendum by 2013 to change the Constitution to achieve this recognition.

Additionally, Council wishes to convey that it still very much supports and advocates strongly for financial recognition of Local Government in the Australian Constitution.

Council also supports the concept of the Federal Government having the power and authority to be able to provide direct funding to Local Government where it is of national benefit and interest.

As a small rural municipality it is extremely critically important that Council has certainty of directly funded programs such as the much appreciated and extremely crucial Roads To Recovery Program and the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program.

Council very much supports the need to amend Section 96 of the Constitution so as 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**”.

Council is particularly adamant that bi-partisan support is an essential precondition if a referendum is to have the best opportunity to succeed.

Realistically the referendum needs to be undertaken at a time which maximises the chances of success but very importantly in consideration to the very poor track record of referendums being successful it is critical that a publicly funded national education and awareness campaign be initiated to inform the public about the Constitution – how to change it, and about the question being asked before the referendum. As you would undoubtedly appreciate an informed voter is more likely to cast an informed vote, which is based on actual and facts rather than misinformation.

All Australians live in local communities and use local facilities every day – local roads (Yarriambiack Shire Council maintains in the vicinity of 5,000kms), footpaths, parks, recreation and sporting facilities, libraries, swimming pools, rubbish collection, stormwater, waste and recycling, planning and building, child care, youth services, public toilets, planning and building standards and environmental conservation etc. Yarriambiack Shire Council actually provides in excess of 80 services to ratepayers, residents and visitors to the area! Basically and essentially Local Government is the voice of their respective and collective communities and as a direct consequence is the closest form of Government to the community.

Elected members and Council staff are also ratepayers, we live and work in the Shire, our children go to school here and also play their sport and recreate here.

Local Government has a proven track record of working in partnership with both the Federal and State Governments as well as with the business/corporate sector and other service providers, to deliver the most appropriate services to the community generally in a very efficient and effective manner.

Local Government consults and engages with the community in various ways – progress associations, consultative committees, liaison groups, stakeholder engagement, public forums to identify and find answers and solutions to local and regional issues and is the most accessible level of government in regard to community contact.

Over the past decade Federal Governments from both sides of politics have demonstrated their desire and preference to use direct funding via initiatives such as the Roads To Recovery Program and also the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program. It is very apparent that the Federal Government wants to support local communities throughout Australia and it has determined that by providing funding directly to Local Government represents the most efficient and responsible mechanism of assisting local communities. An important reason why the Federal Government has decided to provide direct funding to Local Government is that Councils are able to respond quickly and effectively to local issues. As you would appreciate and be aware Local Government played a critical role in delivering in excess of 3,300 small community infrastructure projects and programs to local communities throughout Australia during the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis. There are obvious benefits to direct funding – less bureaucracy, no delays in the funding being received, greater local accountability and definitely greater transparency.

On behalf of Yarriambiack Shire Council I sincerely thank you for the opportunity for providing us with an opportunity to submit our submission in respect to the extremely important and crucial matter of Constitutional Recognition of Local Government. If you have any queries or require any clarification in regard to Council submission please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Enjoy the rest of the day and all the best for an outstanding 2013.

Many thanks and regards

Ray Campling

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I swear never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women and children - this is my oath.