


Submission No:	107
Date Received:	3/1/13
Secretary:	



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**Reference:** 75/20/010  
**Doc ID:** C339614

3 January 2013

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

Via email to [jsclg@aph.gov.au](mailto:jsclg@aph.gov.au)

Dear Mr Worthington

**Re: Submission – Constitutional Recognition of Local Government**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the very important issue of Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Our Council has a history of strong support for the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government as an essential step in ensuring that local communities receive the services and infrastructure that they need.

On 27 April 2011, Council passed the following resolution:

**That Council:**

- 1. Declare 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. Support the inclusion of local government in any new preamble to the Constitution if one is proposed**
- 3. Call on all political parties to support a referendum by 2013 to change the Constitution to achieve this recognition.**

Following its 27 April 2011 meeting, Council wrote to all major political parties calling on support for a referendum by 2013 to change the Constitution to achieve this recognition.

In November 2011 Council made a submission to the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition in support of the Constitutional Recognition of Local Government.

Council's strong support for the financial recognition of local government is unchanged. Council believes that the Federal Government should have the power to provide funding direct to local government where this is in the national interest. Councils require certainty of funding into the future to ensure that programs such as the Roads to Recovery can continue.

Council strongly supports the holding of a referendum on the financial recognition of local government which will seek an amendment to Section 96 of the Australian Constitution so that the Section 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".

The history of referendums in the past has demonstrated that they have very little chance of being successful without bi-partisan support from all political parties. The Federal Government is urged to seek support from all political parties and independents for the financial recognition of local government prior to any referendum being held.

The referendum should be held at a time which reinforces its chance of success and Council believes that a publicly funded education and awareness campaign should be conducted prior to any referendum to ensure that voters have a clear understanding of the proposal for the financial recognition of local government. If voters do not understand what is being proposed, then they are much more likely to vote "no".

It would, potentially, be a costly use of public monies if a referendum proposal which had the bi-partisan support of all political parties as well as the full support of local government was unsuccessful because voters did not fully understand what was proposed and voted "no".

Yours sincerely

**Cr Peter Perkins**  
**Mayor**