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

14 December 2012

Dear Mr Worthington

RE: Constitutional Recognition of local government

I am writing to advise of the City of Palmerston's strong support for the financial recognition of local government in the Australian Constitution. This has been a long-standing position of our council since it passed the following resolution back on 1st March 2011:-

THAT the City of Palmerston 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 and also for inclusion of local government in any new preamble to the Constitution if one is proposed, and calls on all political parties to support a referendum by 2013 to change the Constitution to achieve this recognition.

Our Council is supportive of the Federal Government having the appropriate legislative powers to allow for the direct funding of local government through programs such as 'Roads to Recovery' and the previous 'Regional Local Communities Infrastructure Program'. It is vital to local government across the country that these funding programs continue, along with any other future funding programs that may be developed and are in the national interest.

Council supports the proposed amendment to Section 96 of the Constitution to enable it 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"

For any referendum to have a chance of being successful, it requires bi-partisan support at the Federal, State and Territory level. It is also felt that a referendum should be held in conjunction with the 2013 Federal Election to reduce the cost impact and to give the best possible chance of success.

Through LGANT (Local Government Association Northern Territory), our council has already contributed funding towards a national campaign for constitutional recognition. Council supports a publicly funded national education and awareness campaign to inform the public about the Constitution, how to change

it, and about the question being asked before the referendum. An informed voter is more likely to cast an informed vote which is based on facts rather than misinformation.

I thank you for your consideration of our submission and look forward to the findings of your report which will be released early in the New Year.

Yours sincerely

Ricki Bruhn
Chief Executive Officer

Cc LGANT, ALGA