

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

Committee report recommends a 2013 referendum

The preliminary report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government was published today in Canberra. The Committee recommends that the Australian Government hold a referendum at the same time as the 2013 federal election.

On that day, Australians will be asked to amend the Australian Constitution. If passed, the amendment would guarantee the ability of the Commonwealth Government to continue to directly fund essential community infrastructure through programs such as *Roads to Recovery* for building and upgrading regional roads.

‘This Australia Day weekend, people around the country will be attending barbecues in public parks, enjoying concerts, fireworks and citizenship ceremonies, all organised by local government,’ said Committee Chair Michelle Rowland MP.

‘The services now provided by local government far exceed their functions in the past and local communities rely on this level of service being maintained. Amending the Constitution to provide certainty for direct funding will ensure these services can continue,’ Ms Rowland said.

The Committee has recommended that the Australian Government and the local government sector commence negotiations immediately to secure the support of state and territory governments for the referendum.

The Committee has endorsed the form of words proposed by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Local Government to form the basis for the Australian Government negotiating state and territory support.

The Committee also recommends a national civics education campaign, a referendum panel of experts and key public figures to oversee campaigning and funding for groups to participate in campaigns to ensure the success of the referendum.

‘The Committee has heard from constitutional experts that this referendum will correct the uncertainty currently surrounding the direct funding of important community facilities and services through local governments, said Ms Rowland.

‘Hundreds of community services provided by local government could potentially be under threat if the Australian Government cannot continue to fund local government directly. The proposal for a 2013 referendum is about ensuring that benefits to local communities can still be delivered by local government, but funded by the Australian Government.’

‘The issue of direct funding has gained prominence in the past year since the *Williams* case was handed down by the High Court, and the Committee believes that it is vital to remove this uncertainty now, for the benefit of all Australian communities,’ Ms Rowland said.

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/preliminaryreport.htm

For media comment: contact the Chair’s media advisor, Nick Trainor on 0407 078 138.

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