

*Report by David Backhouse, General Manager*

**RECOMMENDATION**

***That Council note the report on the Constitutional Recognition Campaign.***

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise Council that the Government has agreed to allow the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to use the federal funding provided for the referendum campaign to reimburse local government for the costs incurred in the campaign.

**REPORT**

After the announcement on 9 May that a referendum to recognise local government would be held in 2013, ALGA and the state and territory local government associations put in place the management structure and resources required to run a credible and effective campaign and almost every council across Australia contributed to that effort.

NSW councils contributed funds towards the referendum campaign in good faith, following the announcement.

Since the referendum did not proceed, many councils have been under pressure regarding the contributions they made to the national campaign.

The Government recently announced that the federal funding allocated to the referendum campaign can be used to reimburse all costs associated with the referendum campaign managed by the ALGA.

The uncertainty around the continuation of direct federal funding of local government remains. The implications of previous High Court decisions cannot be ignored and while programs such as Roads to Recovery can continue for the present, they remain vulnerable to a future challenge. The Government has reiterated its commitment to direct funding of local government through programs such as Roads to Recovery and stated that it will look at the implications of any further High Court challenges as they arise. However, the Government does not intend to put forward a referendum to recognise local government in the near future.

Although the future of any referendum remains uncertain, ALGA will be looking carefully at the processes and developments which led up to the 2013 referendum campaign and draw appropriate lessons from the experience and is confident that a future referendum campaign run by local government will be successful.

**REFERRAL FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT**

No referral was required.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Council will be advised of the reimbursement received.