

# **IPA MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **REFERENDUM DISASTER FOR DEMOCRACY IN AUSTRALIA: INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

The text of the Gillard government's referendum proposal confirms the worst held fears that Canberra is intent on controlling local government, according to free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

'The proposed seemingly minor changes to the Constitution would lead to an upheaval of Australian democracy through a massive power grab of local communities,' said IPA Senior Fellow Dr Julie Novak.

'Federal dollars tend to come with strings attached, so this plan is really about centralising more power in Canberra, and further away from local communities.'

'Anything from local planning applications to welfare services for those in need will be affected by federal bureaucratic conditions attached to funding, and not in line with local community preferences.'

'People living in regional and rural areas will be hurt the most by Canberra infiltrating every town hall, because their shires have a lower capacity to raise their own funds than metropolitan councils,' said Dr Novak.

The latest proposal to include local government in the Constitution is at odds with the will of the Australian community, expressed in two previous referendums.

'The Gillard government's proposal only confirms what average Australians find frustrating about this government, and that it doesn't pay heed to the will of the people,' said Dr Novak.

'In 1974, and again in 1988, the Australian people voted against local government recognition, but this government is outrageously forcing taxpayers to fork out \$12 million to fund a campaign for yet another referendum.'

'It is essential that the Liberal-National Coalition, which philosophically supports federalism and our constitutional fabric, doesn't side with the Labor elites and strongly oppose the proposed Canberra takeover of local government.'

'If this referendum is successful, that level of government closest to Australians will become the puppet of the most distant and disconnected government, a prospect which should be rejected in September,' said Dr Novak.

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