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COALITION MUST WITHDRAW REFERENDUM SUPPORT - OR BE COMPLICIT IN RIGGING DEMOCRACY

"The federal Coalition must immediately withdraw its support for the local government referendum. If it does not it will be complicit with the Gillard government's plans to rig Australian democracy", said John Roskam, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs.

Mr Roskam's comments follow the announcement by the federal government on Monday that \$10 million of taxpayers' funds will be given to the 'Yes' campaign, but only \$500,000 will be provided to the 'No' campaign.

"The Gillard government is abusing public money in a cynical and desperate attempt to change the Constitution. It's not enough for the Coalition to just be outraged that there's disparity in public funding. If they don't withdraw their support they're complicit in rigging Australia's democracy", Mr Roskam said.

"Defying the convention that both the 'Yes' and 'No' case in a referendum get equal funding sets a dangerous precedent. The government and the opposition must reveal why they believe this constitutional change is such a good idea given they are too afraid to give the public all the facts about it.

"If such unfair and lopsided funding goes ahead, the result of the referendum will be illegitimate.

"The cynical and manipulative way this referendum has been handled, first by rushing it through, and then by giving one side twenty times as much money as the other should set alarm bells ringing with the electorate", Mr Roskam said.

For media and comment: John Roskam, Executive Director, 0415 475 673