

Councils in \$10m PR blitz

- *Vikki Campion Urban Affairs Reporter*
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<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/sydney-nsw/councils-in-10m-pr-blitz/story-e6freuzi-1226258820484>

Blacktown Mayor Alan Pendleton in the city's CBD in western Sydney. Picture: Jeremy Piper *Source: The Daily Telegraph*

RATEPAYERS are being asked to contribute as much as \$10 million for an advertising blitz supporting councils having financial independence.

The money would be used to convince Australians to vote for constitutional recognition of councils if the federal government holds a referendum at the next election.

Cash-strapped NSW councils have been asked to budget \$2.7 million, or between \$7000 and \$30,000 each depending on population, for the campaign from July this year.

It comes as state governments across the country oppose the move; Western Australia argued it would "downgrade and circumvent the states".

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Blacktown City Council will at tomorrow night's meeting consider a motion to set aside \$33,644.88 over three years "to a large-scale advertising 'yes vote' campaign".

Blacktown mayor Alan Pendleton said constitutional recognition would allow councils to get direct funding from the federal government.

"It will be a step local government has been endeavouring to achieve for many years, that we all hope will lead to direct funding from the federal government. If that happens, everything we have fought for will be worth it," he said.

Blue Mountains City Council mayor Daniel Myles said, while his council backed the cause, he wanted peak council bodies to consider other revenue raising initiatives given the current tough financial climate.

A NSW Local Government and Shires Association letter to councils said that while the scope and content of the campaign were yet to be determined "we do know that funds will be required from each council in NSW".

"We hope alerting you early in your current budget cycle will allow you to factor this contribution into your budgets for the 2012/2013 and subsequent financial years," it said.

"Councils should note that, should the referendum not go ahead, money paid to the LGSA will be refunded."

A spokeswoman for the national body, the Australian Local Government Association, said the federal government funded the last referendum campaign, giving \$15 million to the 1999 debate on whether the country should become a republic.

"Should the Australian government decide to support a referendum on constitutional recognition of local government and federal funding not be forthcoming, ALGA would need to determine whether money could be raised from local government," the spokeswoman said.

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