

Councils chief pushes for recognition



Cr Linda Scott will argue "very strongly against any future forced amalgamation of councils". Photo: Daniel Munoz

Jacob Saulwick

The new president of the peak body representing councils in NSW says she will continue to push for the recognition of local government in the constitution.

Linda Scott, a City of Sydney councillor, was elected last week to the presidency of Local Government NSW, taking over from Coffs Harbour councillor Keith Rhoades.

"I will be arguing very strongly in the forthcoming federal election for constitutional recognition of local government, and arguing very strongly against any future forced amalgamation of councils," said Cr Scott, a Labor councillor.

Cr Scott said she would be also working hard to ensure "state planning policies reflect the importance of local government and local decision-making, and that

councils are funded with an equitable rate base to allow them to deliver for their rate base."

Asked if she would campaign for the de-amalgamation of councils forcibly merged by the NSW government, Cr Scott said her focus

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Linda Scott, Local Government NSW

would be on the future, and preventing any further mergers.

The former prime minister Julia Gillard said in 2013 that a referendum would be held on financial recognition of local government in the constitution.

But a referendum was not held

in the September 2013 election, and the federal government has not since sought to put one on the agenda.

Voters have twice previously – in 1974 and 1988 – rejected referendums proposing the constitutional recognition of local government.

"The local government sector employs 56,000 people in NSW and is responsible for making all our towns in our regions and our cities liveable and wonderful places to live," said Cr Scott. "It's vitally important that the sector has a strong voice to government."

The presidency is a two-year paid position which Cr Scott will combine with her position on City of Sydney council.

Other office holders include Marjorie Spooner O'Neill as treasurer, Angelo Tsirekas as vice-president (metro/urban), and Lindsay Brown as vice-president (rural/regional).