

Dear Senators,

I ask that the following letter be considered as a submission to the enquiry. While it was only written as a letter, I find that, although simple, it sums up the very straightforward – and overwhelming – moral case against removing Indigenous representation from the GBRMP Authority moderately well. While the tone is not as formal as it might be, it also neatly expresses the outrage inspired by the prospect of denying local Indigenous people a voice in the management of the reef. Despite the informality and the speed of composition, both the content and the tone of the letter are considered, measured responses; I find that time to reflect has not only reinforced but increased my objection to the idea of removing Indigenous representation.

I read that you are thinking of removing the mandatory representation of local Indigenous people on the GBRMP Authority.

What on Earth are you thinking?

The Barrier Reef is part of the natural heritage of which local Indigenous people have been custodians for thousands of years. Do you seriously think they will have nothing of value to contribute to its management?

Even if you doubt that they will, to remove their representation on the Authority is to further dispossess them. They used to “own” the area (insofar as anyone can – it is World Heritage for a reason!) and have never been compensated on just terms for its theft. At least while the Authority position is available they keep some say in how things are run and some insider source into developments in the region. To remove that is to further separate them and the land they hold sacred. It would be like saying Christians can no longer have any voice in the community of Bethlehem, or in the way their local parish churches are run. Or for that matter, like saying that the Kerrigans can no longer have a say in what goes into their Pool Room. In fact, it would be an unpleasant amalgam of all three.

I hope you will think better of making such a disgraceful move.

Regards,
Philip Minchin