

Girringun Aboriginal Corporation



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The Secretary

Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Removal of Indigenous Representation from the Board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

It is with some concern that I write to you, on behalf of the Traditional Owners affiliated with Girringun Aboriginal Corporation with interests in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park region, in regards to the above matter.

As the facilitator of the inaugural Girringun Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) between the six saltwater Traditional Owner groups of our region, we query the Australian Government's commitment to the spirit of this Agreement and its intention of building sustainable partnerships between Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef region and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), given its intention to now remove Indigenous representation from the GBRMPA Board and to remove the statutory status of the Authority itself.

Given that the milestone Girringun TUMRA has been certified by the Authority on behalf of the Australian Government, and the Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the State of Queensland, we consider the move to abolish Indigenous representation on the GBRMPA Board to be a serious backward step in the implementation of GBRMPA's stated policy of building constructive dialogues and management partnerships with Traditional Owners of the Great Barrier Reef region.

Girringun Traditional Owners have been the beneficiary of Indigenous representation at the highest level within GBRMPA by ensuring Traditional Owner management concerns are progressed in a positive and constructive way. The manner in which the Australian Government is proposing to make these changes is also of considerable concern.

We understand that legislation is to be considered by the Senate this week to amend the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act* to remove the requirement for GBRMPA to include a representative of Indigenous people and communities adjacent to the Park.

This will mean that the only likely Indigenous input to the management of the marine park will be through a non-statutory advisory committee to the federal Environment Minister. Further, we understand that as a non-statutory committee, there will be no reference to such a committee, or its representations, within the Act, and thus, that there will be no legislative guarantee for any form of statutory committee whatsoever.

We believe that the changes as proposed do not assist in improving the already disadvantaged position of Indigenous people within the context of government policy making and decision making at the federal level. It is disturbing to find such amendments being considered in the absence of any consultations with the Indigenous people and communities affected by the changes as proposed.

Yours sincerely



Phil Rist

Executive Officer
Girringun Aboriginal Corporation