

Received by Email:

Senate Inquiry on the Administration
of Indigenous Affairs

15/7/04

Dear Madam/Sir,

I'm very concerned that the present Government seems determined to end self-determination for Indigenous people. This contradicts the recommendations made by the review into ATSIC, and simply returns Australia to its paternalistic past, where the whites decided how black lives should be lived.

Time and time again in the area of human development, it has been proven that progress occurs where people decide for themselves how an institution should be run. The most efficient organisations are those where there are regular staff meetings from which recommendations and complaints flow, which are actually listened to and acted upon. By the same token, Indigenous voices must be listened to and their suggestions and experience acted upon.

While I'm as aware as anyone of the enormous problems that ATSIC developed, because of the personalities attached to it, that doesn't make the policy that started ATSIC, unsound. Possibly regionally-elected Indigenous groups are the way to avoid the "I am King" syndrome that accompanied National ATSIC.

As soon as you mainstream all Indigenous money, you can be sure it won't be spent as Aboriginal people have found is best. Evidence has shown that people benefit most where they make the decisions, set the standards and run the program. This is so in Indigenous health, education and employment programs.

What really infuriates me most, I guess, is that a white-run organisation of as much reach and importance as ATSIC was, would never be disbanded ignominiously as happened here. The Indigenous people have been treated with contempt and without thought to their future, simply because they are Indigenous.

Indigenous people must manage themselves.

I will appreciate any feedback from this correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

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