



Pat Andruchow
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**The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Administration
of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House, Canberra, 2600**

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing in order to provide input to the Committee's inquiry on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Amendment Bill 2004 and proposed changes to the administration of Commonwealth Indigenous Affairs policy.

This is from the viewpoint of a non-indigenous person who thinks that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to self-determination, human rights, and First People Status. Following on from this, these peoples must be able to decide who represents them locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It would appear that the current bill and suggested administrative changes would deny these fundamental rights as well as contradicting the Government's own review of ATSIC.

Indigenous Australians have endorsed the need for a National Indigenous Representative body which reflects their aspirations and values, and also which is transparent, open, and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Such a body should have primary roles in representation and advocacy, be the principal source of Indigenous policy advice to government, and have control over the provision of Indigenous-specific services.

Outcomes for improving the well-being of Indigenous Australians are far better where there is full and effective Indigenous involvement in decision-making, strong Indigenous organizations and governance, and appropriate cultural recognition within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous institutions as seen in places like Canada.

I would hope that any replacement of ATSIC be determined in consultation and negotiation with Indigenous stakeholders on the basis of their informed consent.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely yours,

Pat Andruchow
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