

64 Northumberland St.,
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Monday 26th July, 2004.

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for participating in this Committee's work. As a non-Indigenous person who has been involved in the work of unpicking racism in Australia since 1962, I have taken a lot of pride in seeing the gradual growth of recognition in my people of a number of important facts:

- that Aboriginal people have lived in this country for untold eons;
- that they have knowledge about how this country needs to be treated that we can learn from;
- that my people have made terrible errors in the treatment of this land in ignorance;
- and have made similar terrible errors in the treatment of Indigenous people;
- that in spite of this Aboriginal culture has survived and Indigenous Australians have continued to stay true to their knowledge, values and ways;
- that Aboriginal people have the right to have the **determining** say in the way decisions concerning them are made.

The decision to abolish ATSIC has symbolic significance way beyond the existence of the body itself. It signifies the denial of this last vital point. Aboriginal matters will no longer be in the hands of representative Indigenous people.

The restoration of this determining, decision-making component of Indigenous affairs to Indigenous hands will go some way to undo the harm of these recent years. There are many interesting ideas in the Aboriginal community about how this could be done effectively. I urge you to see to it that a thorough and broad-ranging consultation process takes place to ensure that these ideas are heard and taken into account as plans for the future of Indigenous affairs in this country are mapped out.

I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Bev Henwood