

Call for Aboriginal identity tests to expose fake Aborigines

The Australian, 20 February 2016, by Michael McKenna

A landmark finding disqualifying a claim of Aboriginality by a former senior NSW public servant has led to indigenous leaders calling for tougher identity checks amid warnings that “fake Aborigines” are involved in widespread rorting of benefits, government jobs and contracts.

The politically sensitive issue dominated a meeting of the Prime Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Council late last year to discuss a new commonwealth procurement policy that at least 3 per cent of all government contracts should be allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

A formal submission has since been made by the council to Malcolm Turnbull’s office to abolish the practice of local Aboriginal land councils signing off on claims — often on the basis of a single statutory declaration — with power given to native title groups to use certified genealogists.

Council chairman Warren Mundine and Queensland Aboriginal leader Stephen Hagan, who until recently headed a council of Australia’s Federal Court-vetted native title organisations, said the existing system to approve claims of Aboriginality was outdated and being rorted. “You can go to any town in the nation with a significant indigenous population and you’ll see not one, but numerous ‘white blackfellas’ falsely claiming Aboriginality to get jobs and benefits that should go to our people,” Mr Hagan said.

“We need a system that properly tests these claims so there is no chance of rorting and to ensure targeted taxpayer funds and jobs go to indigenous people.”

The comments follow a decision this month of the registrar of the Land Rights Act 1983, Stephen Wright, to order the removal of former public servant Laurinne Campbell from membership of a NSW land council after a decade of indigenous community complaints.

Ms Campbell had relied on land council vetting to secure an “Aboriginal identified” position as the Dubbo-based regional manager of the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office and, later, set up an indigenous corporation with her family. In 2011, Mrs Campbell’s “Nigyanni Indigenous Corporation” reported securing almost \$120,000 in government grants and private donations.

Two local Aborigines, elder Ray Peckham and Bernadette Riley, who investigated Mrs Campbell’s claim to Aboriginality — initially approved by the Pilliga Local Aboriginal Land Council — alleged she used Aboriginal names found in an Aboriginal magazine, *Dawn*, to match her family tree.

Aboriginal bus driver Rupert Williams, 60, is among those who featured in the 1960s *Dawn* articles, submitted by Mrs Campbell as part of her 2006 Aboriginality claim to the Pilliga council, and is named as grandfather on her Aboriginal family tree. “I don’t know her and I’m not her grandfather,” he said this week.

After years of complaints, the Independent Commission Against Corruption referred the matter back to Mr Wright, who commissioned two genealogists’ reports that concluded her claims could not be substantiated.

“My finding was that Laurinne Campbell could not demonstrate her right to membership of a LALC (Local Aboriginal Land Council) pursuant to the ALRA (Aboriginal Land Rights Act),” he said. “This finding was primarily based on analysis of a range of family history information provided to me by Laurinne Campbell and the analysis provided by my genealogical reports.”

After making formal complaints, Mr Peckham and Ms Riley were each threatened with legal action. In 2011, solicitor Russell Booby, who wrote that he was acting for Laurinne Campbell and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services, sent letters to the pair accusing them of defamation and racism.

Mr Booby, who this week said it “was my understanding” that his bills were covered by taxpayers, cited the 2011 Federal Court decision against News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt and Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act in a bid to stop their calls for an official investigation. “The allegations have left my client feeling humiliated and publicly derided, and because the allegations spoke to the issue of my client’s Aboriginality and raised some question around that, they have the effect of undermining my client’s professional credibility,” the letter said.

“The court’s decision in Eatock v Bolt is a timely warning to you that my client will not tolerate her Aboriginality and/or her reputation and good character being impugned.”

Mr Peckham, now 86 and a former civil rights activist, said it was “too easy” for people to make claims of Aboriginality without proof. “We won’t stop it all happening in the future but we have to make people think twice,” he said.

When approached by *The Weekend Australian*, Mrs Campbell refused to discuss the findings of the investigation.

Asked if she was Aboriginal, Ms Campbell said: “I am not going to answer that. I am not going to play this game any more. This is a witch hunt that has been going on for years.”

Mr Wright said he would now report to ICAC about her claim of being an Aborigine, but had not made formal findings about Mrs Campbell’s conduct.

“It is not within the jurisdiction of the registrar to make findings about a person such as Laurinne Campbell’s conduct,” he said.

Mr Wright said the question of who may claim legal rights as an Aboriginal person was a “very significant national issue”.

“In my experience, the test for membership of Local Aboriginal Land Councils in NSW is the strongest non-judicial way of establishing that a person can claim to be an Aboriginal person in the Australian jurisdiction,” he said.

“A debate about what more should be done to ensure the legitimacy of claims to Aboriginal identity is long overdue.”

Mr Mundine said there was a need to toughen the vetting process to make a claim of Aboriginality, combining the use of certified genealogical investigators, a statutory declaration from the claimant to their identity and a supporting declaration from the indigenous community.

“We need to toughen the system to ensure that people accessing benefits or getting government jobs or contracts are legitimate,” he said. “People are reluctant to question someone else’s Aboriginality and that’s why we need a very clean open system so people can feel confident.”

Comments

Identity tests could be done quickly with a \$99 DNA test. This would resolve the issue of all those fraudsters pretending to be Aboriginal.

The practice of local Aboriginal land councils signing off on claims of Aboriginality and the recent finding disqualifying a claim of Aboriginality must give Andrew Bolt and others cold comfort.

The court in Bolt's case made it very clear that it's not unlawful to publish articles that challenged the genuineness of someone's racial identity.

At last even some Aboriginal people are complaining about the fraudsters.

All those wanting wishing to claim to be aboriginal should first be DNA tested – easy enough, just a swab inside the mouth. Only those of doubtful origin would object.

Congratulations to Michael McKenna and the Australian, for groundbreaking efforts to tackle yet another taboo topic and start a meaningful and objective investigation of how things are done in the Aboriginal industry.

It's no wonder whites try to pass themselves off as black. Why the hell not when you get paid so much more for being Aboriginal.

At last. It had to come from Aborigines. No white person could dare initiate this. Thankyou Warren Mundine.

All these non-aborigines are clamoring to be identified as Aborigines. The reason – because they get benefits, not available to others.

The worst injustice white Australians have committed against Aborigines is introducing the welfare culture.

This practice of real and fake Aborigines milking our welfare system has to stop!

Whoa! Didn't Andrew Bolt get persecuted, prosecuted and vilified for daring to suggest what the registrar of the Land Rights Act 1983, Stephen Wright, has just decided?

What a sham – with all these urban white people, with no Aboriginal ancestry, who have “rediscovered” their “Aboriginality” by doing a few semesters of some Mickey Mouse Aboriginal studies at some Uni and learned a few words of an extinct Aboriginal language.

They get everything for free simply because they pretend to be Aboriginal.

He has red hair, blue eyes, and freckles. Obviously, an Aborigine! (to the brain-dead – this is called a sarcasm)

Every bloody form you fill out regardless of what it is for always asks you the same bloody question: Are you of Aboriginal descent? No wonder many people tick Yes! and laugh all the way to the bank!

Warren Mundine is absolutely correct to call for identity checks for Aboriginality.

Some people I know are of Greek, Jewish and Irish descent claimed Aboriginal art grants for years and no one ever asked them for any proof.

False claims to Aboriginality is as disgraceful as behaviour gets.

I believe that giving someone special privileges just because of their race is racism.

I would be intrigued to see what would happen if these white impostors' family trees were properly investigated?

About time the heat is turned up on these bludgers.

Real Aborigines who want to live a "traditional" (stone age) life can do so on the land given to them, and do not need the benefits. There's nothing to spend it on.

This has been a multi-billion-dollar rort for decades.

Existing laws that give them all these privileges have to be repealed and discarded. This insanity has gone on for far too long.

So, who will be apologizing to Andrew Bolt? Will he get a refund?

The apologising should be done by the woman who took him to court. Until we repeal the hideous Section 18C, any one of us can find ourselves in the same boat as Andrew Bolt found himself. In fact, the very comments we write here can be used against us in a court of law as they're sure to offend or insult someone, somewhere, sometime.

I'll go to jail, but I'll keep expressing my opinion

Jobs and grants, including taxpayer funded jobs and grants, should be based on merit, not Aboriginal nepotism. The whole sorry farce is disgusting.

So professional Aborigines are now complaining that "white blackfellas" are routinely and falsely claiming access to measures designed for the betterment of genuine, disadvantaged Aboriginal people! Odd: I don't recall hearing their protests when Andrew Bolt was facing the Federal Court a few years ago, making substantially the same point. Back then, "identifying as an Aboriginal person" was enough to meet the requirement, and any attempt to query such a claim, however ludicrous, was greeted with a legal action.

This issue is more than 50 years old.

\$30 billion per year is going to funding Aboriginal affairs, with 40,000 real and 450,000 fake Aborigines claiming Aboriginality – that's almost \$55,000 for every man, woman and child. And yet, nothing is improving in remote Aboriginal communities. As taxpayers, we need to demand that the government investigate this.

I have a friend who has claimed to be an Australian Aboriginal because she's had 7 kids with numerous men and the welfare benefits would be better. Meanwhile, her family history has nothing to do with being Aboriginal as her ancestors came from Europe & America. Granted her grandfather was a black American, but that still does not make her Australian Aboriginal. I can tell you many other stories of a similar nature. Whites or others are posing as Aborigines in order to better their own lot & feather their own nest.

Andrew Bolt got dragged through the courts under Section 18C for trying to expose this whole rotten Aboriginal ancestry claim industry.

About time we realise that "Aboriginality" is just another industry that needs to be policed.

This is just reverse racism, giving benefits to some based on their claims to be of Aboriginal race. Take the sugar off the table and the problem is solved.

Get rid of designated Aboriginal positions... it is racist anyway.

More than 100 people of Sri Lankan descent in Queensland during the past 30 years have received millions of dollars in concessional loans by claiming they were "Aboriginal".

Without a clear, unambiguous definition of who is Aboriginal – VOTE NO IN ANY REFERENDUM!

A few years ago one of the "Indigenous houses of learning" in a major university had an Indigenous Canadian in charge, in an identified Australian Indigenous position!

This situation has really exposed the hypocrisy of indigenous people playing the race card.

These people are too attached to welfare handouts and special treatment. They exploit the system in order to gain money and preferential recognition. For me this game is over!

Easy way to get all these financial advantages – just pretend to be aboriginal.

We've been trying to tell them for decades, but our politicians now pretend to be "Shocked, shocked, to find such things are going on".

So these impostors have more rights and fewer obligations merely because they claim to be Aboriginal?

It's sad and pathetic but it's where we are as a result of government policies and "victim industry". These false advocates encourage the "poor me" mentality, rather than reminding their "clients" about the contributions they could make.

Andrew Bolt did not only fall victim of the very silly clause 18 C of the Racial Discrimination Act, but of equally stupid judge who "read between the lines" of his quite innocent and fundamentally correct statements about white aborigines.

The staggering thing is that we have quietly endured this nonsense for so long, where our hard earned money has been blithely given to anyone who claims Aboriginal heritage.

We created and allowed the rort; now we need to close off this former loophole which is now a massive gap.

Andrew Bolt should apply for a retrial!

I ate a wicket grub once... so I must be an Aborigine, can I have all the benefits please.

Do these lefties realise that Aboriginal entitlement and payments and otherwise about 30 billion annually come from the white non-Aboriginal taxpayers?

Fraud is an obvious charge, so what are we waiting for?

Mrs Campbell names her grandfather as being Aboriginal bus driver Rupert Williams. He says he is not, and doesn't know her. An inexpensive and quick DNA test will show the truth, if any more evidence is required. Prosecute her with any number of criminal charges. It is firstly whether Mr Williams is her grandfather, secondly Aboriginality. Can the Director of Public Prosecutions take this one up? It would appear to be in the public interest.

Just why do people who look 100% European and are regarded as such claim Aboriginal heritage? Is it an inferiority complex, or a superiority complex? Or is it the benefits and money they can access?

I see this not just applying to welfare benefits or preferential treatment for jobs and business contracts but for anything that is to do with Australian Aborigines (Kooris). For example, I have heard accusations of white Marxists weighing in on the Aboriginal debate by claiming that **they** are of Aboriginal descent and are not benefiting. Yeah, right.

There has to be a way for Aboriginal groups and supportive organisations to check the veracity of white people claiming to be of Aboriginal race, especially where benefits and preferential treatment are concerned.

Statistics show how the number of “Aborigines” increased dramatically when it became advantageous financially or otherwise. Of course Andrew Bolt was not shooting in the dark!

Everybody knows that this has been going on for years but the authorities have been too scared to do anything about it.

Since when has the law been applicable only according to race?

We are now being told that what a white journalist was prosecuted for daring to question, only Aboriginal people can be allowed to ask. That in itself is racist, as well as the concept that we encourage one race to keep claiming to be “offended” by anyone who raises a matter of taxpayer’s money and public interest.

Every one of us knows of a number of cases where some recently made claim to aboriginality led to an Aboriginal identified position and lucrative employment, as well as of literary awards and art funding going to these fake white “Aborigines”.

But, as Andrew Bolt said, our mind is not allowed to process what our eyes can see.

You are perfectly correct – as opposed to being politically correct – we are in the midst of reverse racism.

God save us from fake Aborigines!