

# Land council slams Aboriginality rorts

The Australian, March 5, 2016, by Michael McKenna

**One of Australia's largest and historically important indigenous land councils is pushing for action over the increasing number of people making false claims of Aboriginality to access benefits, government jobs and contracts.**

Sydney-based Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, which has the power to legally - endorse claims of Aboriginality, is regularly refusing applicants who are "self-identifying" in a bid to rort the system.

Council chairwoman Yvonne Weldon said as many as "one in 15, possibly more" applicants to her body were fraudulently claiming Aboriginality and that indigenous organisations needed a standardised system of identity checks.

"It is a regular thing ... people who can't even say what tribe they are from or where their family is from and they identify as Aboriginal," Ms Weldon said.

"For some organisations it might be enough, but we send them away and tell them to get proof. We know people are coming to get membership so that they can go get home loans, or Aboriginal-identified jobs or scholarships for our people.

"It is disgusting. Something needs to be done — the way it is going, in a few decades half of Australia will be Aboriginal."

The land council, among the first in Australia and borne out of the Redfern-based civil rights movement, resolved last year to host a series of public forums, beginning in June, to discuss measures to tackle the issue.

Warren Mundine, the chairman of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council, said last month the politically sensitive issue had to be publicly aired and tougher testing of Aboriginality claims was needed. He is understood to have discussed the issue with senior bureaucrats this week.

A formal submission was made by the advisory council to Malcolm Turnbull's office last November to abolish the practice of local Aboriginal land councils signing off on claims, often on the basis of just a statutory declaration, with power given to native title groups to use certified genealogists.

Last month, in a landmark decision, the NSW registrar of the land rights act Stephen Wright disqualified a claim of Aboriginality by a former senior NSW public servant who had held the Aboriginal-identified position of regional manager of the Aboriginal Housing Office.

Laurinne Campbell had relied on land council vetting to secure the public service position and, later, set up an indigenous corporation with her family. In 2011, her 'Nigyanni Indigenous Corporation' reported securing almost \$120,000 in government grants and private donations.

MLALC chief executive Nathan Moran said there had been a "gradual watering-down" of the federal definition of the three-part test of Aboriginality in requiring proven indigenous descent, self-identification and acceptance by an Aboriginal community.

“It really began in the 1990s in public service departments where self-identification began to be enough,” Mr Moran said. “No one wanted to challenge it when people were ticking the box. And we see that with people making applications for membership.

More than 23,000 people in NSW alone have made a claim to Aboriginality through local land councils. Ms Weldon said people had made claims of Aboriginality to the land council on “the basis that they had dreams of being Aboriginal or knocked around with Aboriginal people”.

## **Comments**

The biggest rorts are the Land Councils themselves

Wasn't Andrew Bolt charged and convicted a few years ago for saying the same thing?

The more money you put into Aboriginal affairs, the more Aborigines there are. The more opportunities to cash in on discrimination, the more victims of discrimination there are.

How about stopping racial segregation by NOT having tax funded support programs for Aborigines only – I see that as racism.

I only just got wind of this “I-am-an-aborigine” scam. I ticked the Aboriginal/Torres Strait box and was lined up for some sweet deals straight away.

You beauty! It's about bloody time! Any chance the outlawed articles written by Bolt can now be read and discussed in piece without the hysterics from some self serving people taking issue with him pointing out the bleeding obvious?

Fake aboriginal identity and privilege has been an issue for a long time. No to mention all the land and billions of dollars the taxpayers keep giving to those fakes.

I look forward to the day when there won't be so many generous benefits for Aboriginals.

No wonder everyone wants to be Aboriginal, they have all the rights and no responsibilities.

S18 C which denies us free speech is one of the worst laws ever made & a pitiful disgrace to any government in any free society.

'S18 C is one of the worst laws ever made.

Yes, thanks, Paul Keating for leaving us this minefield of unnecessary and needless lawsuits designed to aid perpetually aggrieved Abos.

Doesn't Gonski include the provision that ALL Aboriginal school students get significant additional funding, with no means testing? If, in ten years, ALL Aboriginal children (like the 1/500th Aboriginal ones due in the next generation) get that additional funding, including the offspring of the significant "Aboriginal" middle class, how much is it going to cost? And a further 25 years later, that's potentially 12 per cent of the Australian population eligible for Gonski Indigenous privilege funding ... (besides the race- rather than merit-based program that gives Aboriginal children hundreds of scholarships to our elite schools). I hope Morrison is looking at this fiscal time-bomb.

Whenever there are benefits on offer, there are people who will seek to gain from them. It is totally unsurprising that non-indigenous people sought to take advantage of the total lack of rigour in the system of identifying as Aboriginal.

Isn't it interesting that many of the comments here seem to blame Aborigines for this, rather than the non-Aborigines who keep allowing them to rot the system.

Is it any wonder the country is a mess?

So, Andrew Bolt was right all along?

Yep, but none of those fakes provided their DNA evidence to back up their claims.

Abolishing the Aboriginal Industry will save Billions.

Bolt got hammered because of a subjective interpretation of "feelings" – bad law.

By a judge who was “reading between the lines” – bad, bad law.

Perhaps someone should inform that judge that made the disgraceful finding against Bolt.

We need an Australian Donald Trump speaking out on this issue.