

## ATSIC's top woman to quit key post

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ATSIC'S only female commissioner will resign today from a key women's policy role over what she describes as a refusal to combat violence within the organisation.

Alison Anderson plans to lodge her resignation as head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's women's committee -- which drives the body's family violence prevention strategy.

Ms Anderson said she was disgusted by the board's failure to act on an "intimidating" email from ATSIC's Cairns regional council chairman Terry O'Shane, revealed by *The Australian* last month.

The board is expected to discuss the issue when it meets by teleconference today. ATSIC has a policy that prohibits email being used to send "unacceptable material".

In the email, Mr O'Shane warned Ms Anderson against accepting an invitation to visit a women's group in Cairns, and threatened to accuse her of the sackable offence of "misbehaviour" if she did not let him control her visit.

She went anyway, and complained to acting ATSIC chair Lionel Quartermaine about the email. Mr O'Shane has previously courted controversy by sending abusive emails to ATSIC commissioner Robbie Williams -- whom he called a "little weasel" and a "despicable person that has no guts" -- and the editor of the *National Indigenous Times*, Chris Graham, who was called a "sook" and ridiculed over a complaint made to the board.

Asked yesterday whether ATSIC had a responsibility to curb such language between its elected officials, Mr Quartermaine demurred.

"Nah, I think it's for the two of them to sort out between them," he said. "It's not for us to do anything."

Last night he issued a statement urging Ms Anderson to reconsider, but she said she would only stay on if the board agreed to send a letter to Mr O'Shane reprimanding him.

Ms Anderson made a formal complaint to ATSIC three weeks ago. But on Monday, the commission's Social and Physical Wellbeing Committee refused to take any action against Mr O'Shane.

Mr Quartermaine said he had written to both parties suggesting ATSIC review protocols on visiting other regions.

But an angry Ms Anderson said last night that response was “bullshit -- I have followed all the protocols, the issue here is the abusive language”.

”In ATSIC, they talk about stopping violence in communities, but it’s happening right in front of their faces.”

”If you ever raise issues about me that try to bring my name into disrepute then you will pay the consequences.”

Email from Terry O’Shane to fellow ATSIC commissioner Robbie Williams on March 21, 2003