
ATSIC's top woman stays after O'Shane says 'sorry'

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A Page-Long written apology from Cairns regional chairman Terry O'Shane has averted the embarrassment of the ATSIC losing its only female commissioner from a pivotal domestic violence post.

Alison Anderson had threatened to quit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's women's committee, which drives the agency's family violence prevention strategy, over an email from Mr O'Shane.

But Ms Anderson, who agreed to stay on after the apology, said she was still disgusted that the ATSIC board failed to show leadership over the dispute.

She said the commission's reticence to reprimand Mr O'Shane had damaged the agency's reputation on family violence issues.

"I am really disappointed that it took me threatening to resign before something was done about it -- it should never have come to that," she told The Australian last night.

Her resignation threat was triggered by what she saw as an "intimidating" email from Mr O'Shane, revealed by The Australian last month.

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". He also accused her of breaching ATSIC protocols.

Mr O'Shane sent her a second email yesterday morning -- copied to other commissioners and regional chairs -- which ultimately averted her resignation.

In his apology, Mr O'Shane begged Ms Anderson to stay in her job.

He said combatting family violence was "far greater than some little hiccup between yourself and me over the interpretation of protocols or your interpretation of my email".

"The indication is that you found this email to be offensive and intimidating, for that let me apologise, it was not my intention to do any one of those things," he wrote.

"I am asking you directly not to resign from this position. I think it is absolutely vital that you drive this ... committee."

Mr O'Shane said last night he had apologised because he did not want to be "too precious" about the dispute.

Ms Anderson said after the meeting that acting ATSIIC chairman Lionel Quartermaine had agreed to order new protocols about internal communication.