

Towards indigenous sovereignty: Reconceptualising the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Australian state

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Abstract

The nature of the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Australian state is of utmost importance in considering the status of indigenous rights in Australia. The recent establishment of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, a national representative body for indigenous peoples in Australia, offers an exciting opportunity to reconsider and renew this relationship. Drawing on the cornerstone principles of equality and self-determination contained within the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this presentation will explore the ways in which a national indigenous representative body can result in a move towards indigenous sovereignty. Whilst the establishment of the National Congress is undoubtedly a positive step in this direction, this initiative needs to be coupled with a structural and constitutional reconceptualisation of the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Australian state. Only then will the National Congress be able to truly and effectively carry out its mandate of protecting and enforcing indigenous rights.