

ATSIC leaders in row over email threat

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An ATSIC regional leader has threatened to accuse the organisation's only female commissioner of the sackable offence of "misbehaviour" if she does not let him control her visit to north Queensland this week.

Alison Anderson has complained to Indigenous Affairs Minister Philip Ruddock and ATSIC chief executive Wayne Gibbons over the "outrageous" email from Cairns regional council chairman Terry O'Shane.

"We talk about getting rid of violence in our communities but first of all we have to expose the violence in ATSIC, and this is mental abuse," she said last night.

But Mr O'Shane denied any wrongdoing, saying he had sent similar letters in the past to other Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Commission officials in which he blasted them about failing to consult him about their business when they visited the region.

"I've put the bounce on (ATSIC commissioners) Ray Robinson and Terry Whitby, saying they've got no business to come here without talking to me. That's my normal process," he said. "She has got no decency, that woman."

In last Friday's email, obtained by The Australian, Mr O'Shane accuses Ms Anderson of "mischief making" by meeting with a local women's group, which he says could embroil her in a "political hotspot". "On behalf of council, our advice is that you reconsider your acceptance of the invitation," his email says.

"If you don't give recognition and respect to this council, which by its election it deserves, then on behalf of council I will be seeking from the minister a clear interpretation of the 'misbehaviour provisions' with a view of presenting to him our concerns about your visit," he wrote.

Ms Anderson said from Cairns last night that the email was a clear attempt to intimidate her.