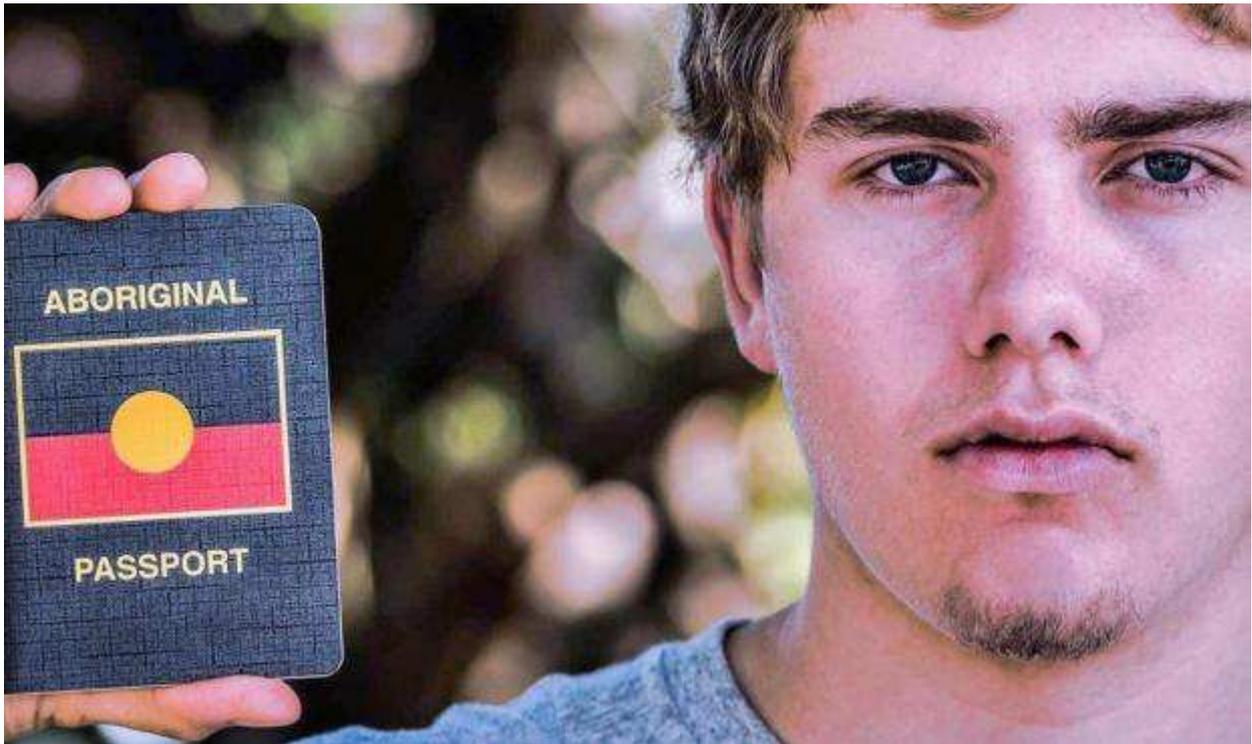


# Tolerance of travellers with Aboriginal passports amounts to recognition, says activist

Callum Clayton-Dixon, who says he was ‘hassled’ by customs upon re-entering Australia, was allowed through after they confirmed he was a citizen



Callum Clayton-Dixon is chairman of the self-declared Aboriginal Provisional Government which issues passports to eligible Indigenous people. Photograph: Twitter

[Joshua Robertson](#)

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The Australian government’s tolerance of citizens returning on Aboriginal passports amounts to de facto recognition via a loophole, says an Indigenous activist using his to re-enter the country a second time.

Callum Clayton-Dixon said he was “hassled” by customs officials in [Brisbane](#) for about 40 minutes but then allowed through after returning from New Zealand on Monday.

The Department of Customs and Border Protection does not recognise Aboriginal passports as valid travel documents but Indigenous people have used them to re-enter Australia for about three decades.

Clayton-Dixon, who refused officials' requests to show other forms of identification but was allowed through after they independently confirmed he was an Australian citizen, said authorities had "created that loophole themselves".

"Essentially, that's what's happening because they deem us Australian citizens," Clayton-Dixon told Guardian Australia.

"We reject Australian nationality, we reject Australian citizenship, but on their part, it's kind of a loophole that they've created unfortunately, in which we're allowed to by default use our Aboriginal passports to come back into our own country."

Clayton-Dixon is chairman of the self-declared Aboriginal Provisional Government (APG) which issues passports to eligible Indigenous people.

A spokeswoman for the department said that authorities would "in certain circumstances" act to identify travellers seeking to enter Australia without valid documents.

"If such a person is subsequently confirmed to be an Australian citizen, their entry is permissible; although certain conditions will apply," she said.

Clayton-Dixon said Aboriginal people had the right to use their own passport over "a foreign and colonial travel document", which was "an act of Aboriginal sovereignty".

"We have the right to put 'Aboriginal' on the nationality section of the incoming passenger card instead of 'Australian'," he said.

"The [United Nations](#) states clearly that indigenous peoples have the right to determine our own political status, to be self-determining."

Clayton-Dixon was one of four activists involved with the APG who re-entered Australia on the passports from Canada last September.

"Both times I've come back through, they've just caused a fuss and then say, OK, go on, go through," he said.

No bearer of an Aboriginal passport is known to have ever received a stamp by an Australian official.

But international recognition dates back to the 1980s when Indigenous delegations twice had their passports stamped by the Libyan government. In the early 1990s, two APG executive council members had theirs stamped in Norway and Sweden before they were held up in Darwin.

Clayton-Dixon said his APG delegation entered Canada on Aboriginal passports, was detained for 45 minutes then released.

The group was "very proud" to have subsequently had their passports stamped by chiefs from North America's most powerful indigenous alliance, the [Haudenosaunee Confederacy](#).

The confederacy – which had been using its own passports since 1976, gaining recognition from governments including Japan, Bolivia and Switzerland – gave APG advice on the importance of getting their passports to meet international security standards laid down by the United Nations.

Since January the APG have been in talks with an overseas passport producer on revamping Aboriginal passports for rollout in early 2016, Clayton-Dixon said.

“Once it is revamped we’re looking at going to places like Bolivia, Venezuela to get them to officially recognise the revamped Aboriginal passport,” he said.