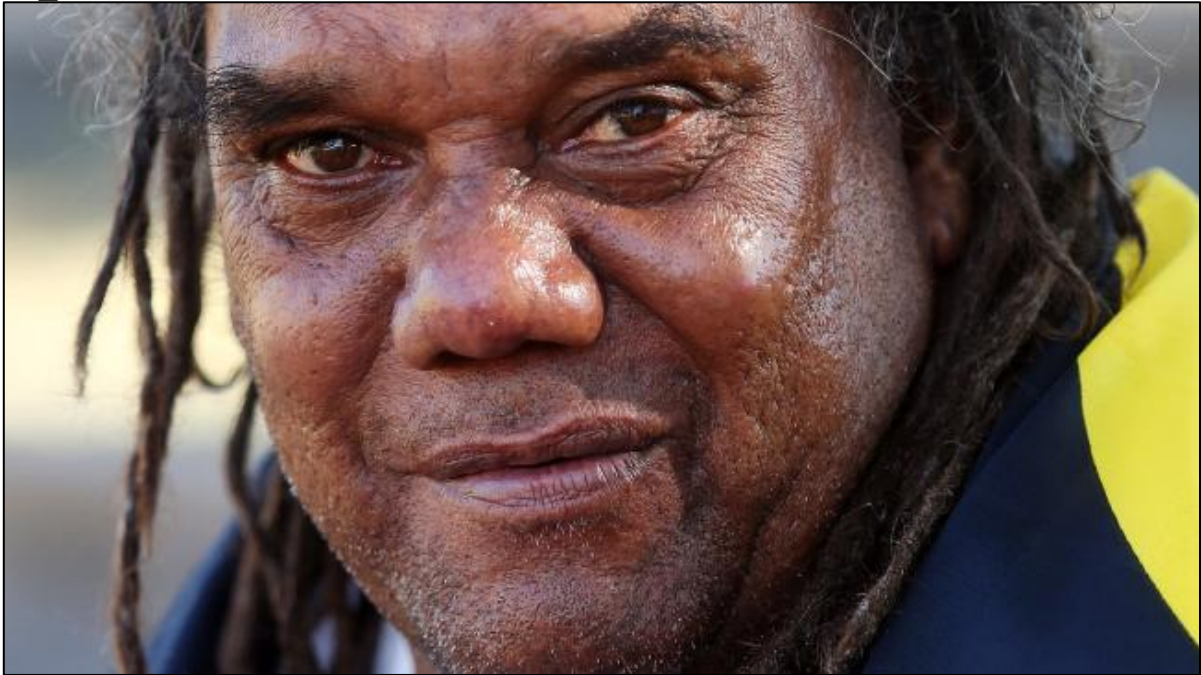


## Indigenous activists warn of protests at Commonwealth Games



*Wayne Wharton has warned against violence at the Commonwealth Games in April.*

- Richard Ferguson
- *The Australian*
- 26 February 2018

The leader of a militant Aboriginal group targeting the Commonwealth Games has warned that young activists could resort to terrorism in pursuit of their goals.

Brisbane activist Wayne Wharton said Malcolm Turnbull's intransigence on indigenous issues from Australia Day to the Uluru Statement was pushing some protesters to consider more radical and, potentially, violent tactics.

"Malcolm Turnbull's statements in the past three weeks are close to inciting (the use of) guns and (Aboriginal activists) taking up terrorism," he said. "Some of our young people are not far off it with the things he's said."

Mr Wharton said he would not promise that protests at the Games on the Gold Coast in April would remain peaceful.

"If a policeman or a white racist comes for me, I am taking justice into my own hands," he said. "I'm not afraid of jail ... we won't go near innocent people but there's no justice in the white system and we need to stand up."

Mr Wharton's statements leave a spectre of violence over the Games, which are already expecting large-scale protests.

One group involved in a campsite being set up outside the Games complex by Mr Wharton is the Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance who previously have vowed to “burn Australia to the f..king ground”.

Mr Wharton is the leader of the Brisbane Aboriginal-Sovereign Embassy, a radical group that advocates the decolonisation of Australia. His previous activities include burning effigies of mainstream indigenous leaders Noel Pearson, Warren Mundine and Marcia Langton.

He said protest groups would target Prince Charles during the Games, but would make no attempt to harm him.

Mr Wharton urged Commonwealth countries that no longer have the Queen as head of state to pressure Australia over its record on indigenous rights and to potentially blacklist it from holding international events in the future.

He also criticised fellow indigenous Australians who are supporting the Games as spectators or participants.

Australia’s most famous indigenous athlete, Olympic and world champion runner Catherine Freeman, is a Games ambassador.

Games chairman Peter Beattie said the Games were the first to have a reconciliation strategy and the local Yugambah people had been closely involved in planning.

“People always have a right to protest ... I just hope it doesn’t undermine the important work that’s been done to make these Games an important moment for reconciliation,” he said.