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Former One Nation senator Rod Culleton's fledgling right-wing political party has embarked on a recruitment drive in outback **Aboriginal** communities through an alliance with an Indigenous sovereign citizen movement.

Leaked emails reveal Mr Culleton's Great Australian Party and the Original Sovereign Tribal Federation signed a memorandum of understanding in August last year based on their shared aim to "stand down the illegal corporation [the Australian government] harming us all".

Under the agreement, Mr Culleton promised his party's support for the tribal federation's push for self-determination and self-governance. In return, the federation has encouraged its membership to join the Great Australian Party.

Although a formal alliance between the former One Nation senator's new party and hardcore Indigenous activists might seem unusual, the leaked emails show both groups are seeking to tap into the sovereign citizen subculture which has gained prominence in Australia and abroad since the emergence of COVID-19.

Sovereign citizens believe federal and state governments are invalid and therefore they do not need to pay tax or obey the instructions of police or the courts.

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Shane Patton last year expressed concern about the rise of sovereign citizens protesting against COVID-19 restrictions during Melbourne's second lockdown.

Former television celebrity chef and conspiracy theorist Pete Evans also appears in the email communications with representatives of the Great Australian Party and the tribal federation. Mr Culleton announced on Friday that Mr Evans would run as a senate candidate for his party at the next federal election.

The emails refer to Mr Culleton being a "senator in exile" and the people of Australia being "usurped" by an "illegal corporation", language similar to proclamations made by extremist elements supportive of former US president Donald Trump.

The leaked documents also reveal that late last year Mr Culleton and tribal federation leaders discussed persuading independent Indigenous Northern Territory MP Yingiya Guyula to declare himself for the Great Australian Party.

Mr Guyula did not respond to questions and his official NT parliamentary page continues to list him as an independent.

The emails also show a tribal elder in WA being urged by a tribal federation representative to get as many people in her community as possible to become members of Mr Culleton's party.

While the Great Australian Party and the tribal federation operate on the fringe of mainstream society, their alliance has potential electoral consequences in remote parts of Australia where populations are sparse and the number of Indigenous voters is high.

The Great Australian Party was registered by Mr Culleton in 2019. Its policies include the removal of personal income tax, the renationalisation of the Commonwealth Bank, relaxing gun control laws and the abolition of the Family Court.

Mr Culleton was removed from the federal senate in 2017 after the High Court ruled he was ineligible to run as a candidate at the 2016 election due to an unresolved criminal matter.

The Original Sovereign Tribal Federation has existed for more than 10 years and does not publicly disclose its membership numbers. But it has claimed to have registered dozens of tribal groups who declare they never ceded sovereignty.

The emails show Mr Culleton has worked closely with two of the tribal federation's leaders, Mark McMurtrie and **David Cole**. The pair have previously unsuccessfully advised Indigenous people facing criminal charges to argue the law does not apply to them because they were sovereign citizens.

Mr McMurtrie recently suggested on Facebook that burning down a church would be a good way for a community to get police attention and claimed Joe Biden's election meant "the paedophiles now have the White House".

University of Technology Sydney law lecturer Harry Hobbs said while there was validity to the argument that Indigenous Australians had never ceded their sovereignty, he did not believe they would find satisfaction by aligning with the Great Australian Party.

"Some of their legal theories are bizarre and won't be accepted by any court anywhere," he said.

Dr Hobbs, who specialises in constitutional law and Indigenous rights, said the sovereign citizen movement had gained in popularity with the emergence of COVID-19 and the need for government restrictions on movement.

"These movements tend to gain momentum as people are looking for an out when their world is falling apart. Right now, most of these people are attracted and radicalised through YouTube," he said.

Mr Culleton declined to respond to questions from The Age about the status of his party's relationship with the tribal federation unless the source of the emails was disclosed.

Mr Cole said in an email that he and Mr McMurtrie would not be able to respond to questions until later this week.

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