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Only lies can defeat indigenous voice: Pearson

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Cape York leader Noel Pearson says the truth is out about the just movement for a First Nations voice in the constitution and now only lies can defeat it.

In a speech to the Garma festival in Arnhem Land today, Mr Pearson excoriated the Institute of Public Affairs for dispatching “young boys” like child soldiers to disseminate pap against the voice.

“Our opponents in the Institute of Public Affairs attempt to put a liberal philosophical sheen on Andrew Bolt’s argument that a First Nations voice would constitute separate treatment on the basis of race in the constitution,” he said.

“This argument succeeds only if you ignore the truth that our claim is on the basis of our being indigenous to this country, not on the basis of race. Bolt and the IPA remain steadfastly obscurant on this.

“They refuse the truth that if the Yolngu (of Arnhem Land) were blonde and blue-eyed, they would be no less indigenous to this Arnhem Land ... Who would say to the Sami of the Arctic Circle or the Maori of New Zealand that their status is based on race and not that they are native to their homelands?”

A day after Gumatj clan leader Galarrwuy Yunupingu warned his Yolngu people would turn their backs on Australia’s highest law document if their demand for significant constitutional change was ignored, The Cape York Partnership founder said reform was especially important for them.

“I mean not to diminish the rightful claim to recognition of all First Nations across the country in saying that the urgency of recognition is especially serious for our most traditional societies,” Mr Pearson said.

“The Yolngu of this land need Australia to afford them the chance of defining what Galarrwuy Yunupingu called ‘a modern version of ourselves’ under the framework of constitutional recognition of their right to be themselves and to retain their high culture and languages in all their classical glory.

“The interweaving of the Enlightenment and high culture of the Yolngu must be a journey of their own choosing, and the terrible structure of forced assimilation must end. The Yolngu need the freedom to define their future, anchored in their own heritage.”

Mr Pearson said the challenge for supporters of the Uluru Statement of the Heart was to keep transcending the Left-Right binary of what he called “The Great Mainstream Tribes of Australia” and to stay above their culture wars.

Federal Minister for Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt was in the audience as Mr Pearson lamented that the cause was being sucked into a cruel vortex of useless conflicts between white progressives and white conservatives, even though it enjoyed a lot of support from people on the right.

He listed conservative commentators and politicians as well as constitutional experts who have publicly supported a constitutionally-enshrined indigenous voice to parliament.

The list included former Business Council of Australia chairman Graham Bradley and “right-wing commentator and perhaps our most champion supporter of the voice Chris Kenny”.

Mr Pearson cited the landmark speech of former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia Murray Gleeson on July 18 as “the last word on the legal integrity of the Voice and its seamless compatibility with the constitutional history of the Australian Commonwealth”.

“Those who would scandalise the proposal and rouse fear through misrepresentation could never face squarely Gleeson’s luminous erudition and speak ill again,” he said. “The one duty owed by all those who say they have fears and legitimate concerns, is to read the jurist’s analysis.”

Mr Pearson said Mr Gleeson had dispelled the cant and exposed the false intellectual foundations of the arguments mustered by the rejectionists.

“Are we not entitled to expect when one such as Mr Gleeson, the nation’s most eminent black-letter legal conservative, gives his imprimatur to such a proposal, that Australians black and white, indigenous and non-indigenous, heed his counsel?” Mr Pearson said.

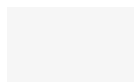
“Otherwise what kind of moral let alone legal community is Australia? One that only invokes the spirit of our rule of law and our constitutional heritage when it suits? Do these culture warriors really believe they know better than the country’s most senior elder of the law?”

Mr Pearson said that since Mr Gleeson’s address, the movement’s pleading to the Australian people is: “We rest our case.” “The only available rebuttal is to simply insist: we refuse your proposal, because we don’t want to support it.”

Mr Pearson said the slur of racial separatism could still kill off the voice, but he remained hopeful.

“If our cause perish it will not fall victim to truth. Only lies will defeat us,” he said.

“If our cause for empowerment be wrecked it will not be because we steered our ship onto rocks of national strife and discord. All we seek is our rightful place



Paige Taylor is from the West Australian goldmining town of Kalgoorlie and went to school all over the place including Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and Sydney's north shore. She has been a reporter since 1... [Read more](#)



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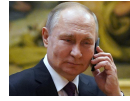
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