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Perkins says Mansell is hurting black cause

By CARMEL McCAULEY,
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The head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Charles Perkins, yesterday launched a scathing public attack on the Aboriginal activist Mr Michael Mansell, calling him a "fanatic".

He accused Mr Mansell, legal adviser for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, of damaging the cause of black Australians by associating Aborigines with terrorist groups.

Mr Perkins said Aborigines did not support Mr Mansell and did not want to have anything to do with any terrorist activity. "It's all right for Mr Mansell to sit comfortably in Hobart with his fanatical supporters around him and start talking about Aborigines wanting the support of terrorists.

"But he has no credibility, his

opinions are his own. He speaks for nobody but himself . . . All he's doing is antagonising rednecks on the mainland against Aborigines."

Mr Perkins said he had tolerated Mr Mansell's previous remarks about Aborigines wanting support from Libya and wanting to set up a separate Aboriginal nation. But Mr Mansell had "gone too far" in Launceston on Monday night when he had associated Aboriginal people with the Irish Republican Army.

"We have problems between blacks and whites, but we are solving them amongst ourselves as a democracy, in a constructive way," Mr Perkins said. "This may be slow and frustrating, but we don't want anything to do with terrorists. We're not going to let him drag us with him to those depths."

Mr Mansell could not be contacted for comment last night.