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## Clear-run pledge for Pearson plan

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PREMIER Peter Beattie has promised to clear any bureaucratic obstacles to the reform of Aboriginal welfare delivery -- but only if the indigenous community can produce a consensus.

Mr Beattie's comments came on the eve of his attendance at today's meeting with up to 500 Aboriginal leaders at Wujal Wujal, north of Cairns.

The meeting has been convened to discuss a proposal by Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson for wholesale change to government dealings with Aborigines.

Mr Pearson has argued current approaches are failing to eliminate Aboriginal disadvantage and have left Aborigines too dependent on social security.

Yesterday, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Queensland North Commissioner Terry O'Shane, a close supporter of Mr Beattie, said many Aborigines were prepared to reject Mr Pearson's formula "at every forum" until it had been properly discussed.

Mr O'Shane's entry into the debate puts Mr Beattie in a difficult political position because Mr O'Shane is his key link to the Aboriginal community and helped him produce an indigenous working protocol tabled in Parliament earlier this year.

Late yesterday, Mr Beattie said there were positive aspects to the Pearson plan and that he wanted to act as an honest broker to help the Aboriginal community reach a consensus.

"If there are clear directions from a vast majority of indigenous people about handling these issues then we have a direction and I will make sure government delivers on that," Mr Beattie said.

"The matters of detail should be worked out by the Aboriginal community."

But Mr Beattie rejected claims his government was dragging its feet on the Pearson proposals because of resistance within the bureaucracy.

"I don't think that an inflexible bureaucracy is the problem that some people have wanted to paint it as," Mr Beattie said.

"You've got to have a vision and you've got to have steps to reach that vision."

Mr Beattie also called for corporate Australia to recognise the potential for investment in Aboriginal communities, particularly in tourism.

“Indigenous culture will be a significant tourism attraction and there are jobs for indigenous people out of it,” he said.

Earlier Mr O’Shane said many Aborigines did not understand Mr Pearson’s controversial reform plan and believed they had not been consulted.

“They feel Beattie has listened to Noel who is a non-elected person and they are concerned that the idea of development in Cape York could lead to the extinguishment of native title rights of traditional owners,” Mr O’Shane said.

“They are saying to Beattie that he should listen to the elected representatives -- people who do have a mandate.”

Mr O’Shane said some of the concern expressed to him had been about financial details of the Pearson proposal.

“All those things need to be addressed before people are prepared to give support to this proposal,” Mr O’Shane said.

“There’s a body of people in Cape York who intend at every forum to oppose Noel’s proposal until such time as the consultation and endorsement has happened.”