



Pearson labelled arrogant and ignorant by TV boss

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CANBERRA, July 31 AAP - Prominent Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson has been labelled an ignorant and arrogant "golden-haired boy" of the federal government by a television boss furious at his attack on a new indigenous TV station. In a newspaper opinion piece last week,

Mr Pearson accused National Indigenous Television (NITV) of stealing its satellite licence from the Alice Springs-based community broadcaster Indigenous Community Television (ICTV). Mr Pearson said NITV was more interested in manufacturing "black urban glamour" programming than telling the grassroots stories of those in remote indigenous communities. NITV started broadcasting earlier this month, using Imparja TV's second channel, to which ICTV previously provided content.

NITV board member and chairman of Imparja TV Owen Cole today hit back at Mr Pearson's attack, saying his suggestion that grassroots producers would be ignored by the channel was "absolute rubbish". He said Mr Pearson was showing his "ignorance and arrogance" by supporting a factually inaccurate open letter to Communications Minister Helen Coonan in which Frank Rijavec, an ICTV employee, spells out his concerns about NITV.

Mr Cole said Mr Pearson did not care about ICTV - which, he pointed out, never actually owned a broadcasting licence - but was opportunistically using the issue as an excuse to deride people who disagreed with his and the federal government's indigenous policies. Mr Pearson has been supportive of the federal government's radical intervention to tackle child abuse in the Northern Territory. He was also the chief architect of the government's welfare reforms, which make payments conditional on behaviour. Mr Cole said people were starting to question Mr Pearson's links to the government, labelling him its "golden-haired boy".

"They listen to everything he says and Noel Pearson doesn't like other people offering a different opinion," he told ABC Radio. NITV says it expects its audience will be approximately 220,000 people in remote Australia.

Further negotiations are underway for the service to be available on Foxtel and Austar later in the year.

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