

Wild Rivers Act crushes Aborigines: Pearson

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NOEL Pearson has backed the Liberal National Party's plan to scrap wild rivers declarations on Cape York, castigating the laws as a "green foot" crushing the throats of Aborigines.

As Queensland Premier Anna Bligh warned that the move would allow rampant mining, Gulf of Carpentaria indigenous leader Murrandoo Yanner slammed the LNP for promising to roll back the protection legislation.

Signalling a widening divide between indigenous factions, Mr Yanner said LNP leader Campbell Newman had listened only to Mr Pearson and his allies in developing the policy.

"Mr Pearson does not have support in Aboriginal Queensland, particularly in the Gulf, the northwest and his own region, in the Cape," Mr Yanner said, adding that he had been contacted by many traditional owners who supported wild rivers.

Mr Newman said an LNP government would repeal the declarations over four Cape York river systems that set a 1km buffer zone around the protected rivers to restrict mining and dams.

He refused to commit on the other seven river systems declared wild across Queensland, including some in the Gulf and on Fraser Island.

That sparked anger from Mr Yanner and southwest Queensland traditional owner Scott Gorringe, who said they feared Mr Newman would scrap the entire protection regime.

Mr Newman said he would replace the wild rivers declarations on Cape York with a bio-region management plan. "We want strong environmental protections for those iconic natural areas . . . but our plan would see all Cape York properly managed, properly protected," he said.

Cape York Land Council chairman Richie Ah Mat and Mr Pearson welcomed Mr Newman's announcement.

Mr Pearson said the Wild Rivers Act was "concocted by green groups in Brisbane in return for green preferences".

"We believe that there is a way forward for conservation, development and

Aboriginal land rights," he said. ``I want to see whitefellas, blackfellas and greenfellas all working for a balanced future.

``At the moment what we've had under the Wilderness Society and the Labor government is the greenfellas putting their foot on our throats."

The spokeswoman for the Queensland Greens, Libby Connors, said no preference deal specifically on wild rivers had been done with Labor. She said Mr Newman's plan showed he would do anything to push the ``pro big-miner agenda"