
Pearson fights off cancer scare

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ABORIGINAL activist Noel Pearson has recovered from treatment for cancer, which is in remission after four months of chemotherapy in Brisbane. Lew Griffiths, a spokesman for the Cape York indigenous leader, said yesterday Mr Pearson had beaten the disease.

"He's in remission and we are certain he has dodged a bullet," Mr Griffiths said. "He is with his wife and children, surrounded by the best love and care a man can hope for. All the signs are he has beaten it, but he has had a rough year."

Mr Griffiths said the illness -- believed to be lymphatic cancer -- had "come out of nowhere".

Mr Pearson, 46, has been in remission for six weeks, after treatment in Brisbane. "Noel is a hard-headed, tough man and an extraordinary leader and this is a moment he will get over," Mr Griffiths said. "He'll continue to make the absolute difference in the policy work he has undertaken for his whole life."

Mr Griffiths denied a report in *The Monthly* of a "cooling" of Mr Pearson's relationship with *The Australian's* editor-in-chief, Chris Mitchell, over the newspaper's pursuit of funding improprieties at the indigenous Djarragun College, and the publication of an article by five-time Walkley Award-winning journalist Tony Koch that criticised his "sudden outbursts and his often bitter tongue".

"As with all professional relationships, there are ups and downs, but there has been no falling out between Noel and Chris," Mr Griffiths said. "Chris Mitchell is a highly respected and highly regarded newsman, as far as we are concerned, and *The Australian* newspaper has never shied away from doing the tough stories."

Mr Griffiths said Mitchell had understood a decade ago the "dysfunction and the poison" of welfare dependency in indigenous communities. "He was ahead of his time in reporting on this, and Noel Pearson was out there blowing his bugle and has done the hard work to develop a range of policies for the indigenous people of Cape York," he said.

Mitchell said *The Monthly* had "got it all wrong", and its editor John van Tiggelen -- who wrote the story -- had never called him. "I have had no falling out with Noel," he said.

"I have had very long talks with him since Tony Koch's piece ran, and had published several pieces in support of Noel since Tony's original piece."