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## **NSW: Noel Pearson "drunk with power", says NSW Land Council leader**

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SYDNEY, July 9 AAP - Prime Minister John Howard is attempting an "occupation" of the Northern Territory and Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson is "drunk with power", the new chairwoman of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council says. In a blistering attack during her first major address as NSWALC leader, Bev Manton said the prime minister's NT emergency plan to save Aboriginal children from abuse was "discriminatory, punitive, top down and ill-conceived."

Ms Manton said she wanted to tell Mr Howard: "If you're fair dinkum - if you want Aboriginal people to get behind your NT foray - abandon your proposed land grab in the same way you have abandoned compulsory health checks.

"We will back your decision to the hilt. "And while you're at it - please explain to the Australian people how an army of temporary volunteers is going to provide long-term solutions to the permanent shortfall of doctors, teachers and police in the NT?"

In her speech marking the 50th anniversary of NAIDOC week (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee), Ms Manton also took aim at Mr Pearson , who has supported the federal government's NT emergency plans.

"When I saw Noel Pearson 's extraordinary interview on Lateline last month I thought this man is drunk with power," she said.

"I say to Noel Pearson : How dare you? How dare you run down Aboriginal people and their supporters for standing up to a botched last-minute rescue mission dreamt up by people with very questionable track records?

" Noel is not being the wise person that he has been known to be for many years. "Like many Australians, I have held him in very high regard for a long time but he seems to have now shot himself in the foot."

Ms Manton said she made her comments "mindful of the fact that the media loves nothing better than a black upon black verbal dust-up".

Speaking at western Sydney's Penrith Town Hall, she urged Aboriginal and other Australians to harness their anger and join the electoral roll if they wished to see change. Ms Manton also outlined achievements of the NSWALC since its inception in 1983. Its new nine-member state council, which was elected on May 19,

supervises a statutory investment fund worth \$680 million and 616,460 hectares of land with an unimproved capital value of more than \$2 billion.

**AAP**