
Pearson hits back over ceremony attack

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Indigenous leader Noel Pearson has slammed Tony Abbott for crossing "a line" with his attack on Aboriginal welcome-to-country ceremonies, comparing it to anti-Semitism.

Writing today for *The Weekend Australian*, Mr Pearson accuses the Opposition Leader of feeding an "unfortunate, irrational, anti-Aboriginal undercurrent". Mr Abbott stirred controversy this week by criticising the welcome-to-country component of official functions.

Mr Pearson, the director of the Cape York Institute think tank, warns that Mr Abbott's criticism of welcome-to-country ceremonies will reinforce wrongful perceptions that the "pendulum had swung too far" in favour of Aborigines.

But he accepts that welcomes to country -- recognising traditional ownership of land -- can be silly, tedious and tokenistic. "Responsible conservatives should understand that it makes no difference if we're talking about money or symbolism," Mr Pearson writes.

"The people who resent Aboriginal Australians taking their fair share are as resentful about immaterial things as they are about material resources.

"Those who have ideas about 'reverse racism' in favour of Aboriginal people will not be able to provide evidence or logical reasoning in support of their fixation, but will therefore latch on to anything that vaguely resembles their resentment."

Mr Pearson sees a similar construct in the persecution of Jewish people.

"The central figure of thought of irrational anti-Semitism is 'the Jews have too much of X', where X may be something tangible, material, political or cultural," he writes.

"It is time we realise that the core of anti-Aboriginal thinking is the figure of thought that 'the Aborigines have been given too much X'."