
Yanner calls for Pearson's portfolio

Author: Brian Williams

Courier Mail

20 October 2010

ABORIGINAL leader Murrandoo Yanner has challenged activist Noel Pearson to declare whether he has any financial or pecuniary interests in any mining company or projects.

Mr Yanner, of the Carpentaria Land Council, said Mr Pearson's role in lobbying Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and other politicians on Wild Rivers legislation, and its impact on mining, demanded he state publicly whether or not he had any links to the industry.

He wants to know if Mr Pearson, or any group he works with, has received support of any kind from mining interests.

Mining company Cape Alumina on Monday blamed the Wild Rivers listing of Cape York's Wenlock River for ruining its nearby bauxite project, although it continues preparatory work on the enterprise.

Cape Alumina chief executive Paul Messenger hopes Mr Pearson and Mr Abbott will be able to convince federal MPs to overrule state Wild Rivers legislation.

This would allow them to mine closer to the river, increasing the amount of available ore.

“I have no financial interest in any projects up here,” Mr Yanner said. “I am a traditional owner and have the right to comment. I want to hear from Noel on this.”

Mr Pearson did not return calls yesterday.

The Government is proceeding with its Wild Rivers listings and, on Monday, Natural Resources Minister Stephen Robertson said the Government would extend Wild Rivers protection to Lake Eyre Basin rivers.

These are the Cooper, Georgina and Diamantina in the state's far west and the move has met with a mixed response.

Grazier Angus Emmott of Noonbah Station, 130km southwest of Longreach, said yesterday most people in the region supported Wild Rivers listing.

``Some graziers are against it but none of us want irrigation on these rivers," Mr Emmott said. ``Listing protects the clean and green beef industry and eco-tourism so these industries can continue into the future.

``That's why there's such a kerfuffle over the Murray-Darling (irrigation cutbacks). No one looked at the big picture down there. No one planned long-term. We don't want that happening here."

Wild Rivers legislation is meant to protect 22 free-flowing rivers, among the last in Australia which are not dammed. Ten have been listed, with 12 more to be protected.

Mr Abbott wants Mr Yanner to oppose the legislation and yesterday Independent MP Bob Katter said he also would raise the issue with Aboriginal communities.

State Opposition Leader John-Paul Langbroek said the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should become an integral plank in the state's economic strategy.

Mr Langbroek said the Wild Rivers policy had imposed a virtual ban on Cape York job creation. In contrast, the LNP would transform communities of welfare into communities of enterprise.