

ABC revived Kate Jones abuse claim as payback, says Noel Pearson



Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

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Indigenous leader Noel Pearson has questioned the timing of an ABC report alleging he called Queensland's Education Minister Kate Jones a "f..king white c.." seven years ago which came a week after he labelled the public broadcaster "racist" and "miserable".

Mr Pearson has admitted the "f-word" was used during the fiery Wild Rivers meeting in Cairns in 2009 but denied he used the "white c.." term or addressed Ms Jones in that way.

"The f-word was used," he said. "The w-, c-words weren't used. She was virtually invisible in the meeting. She did not say anything, not one word and neither did anybody say anything to her," he said.

"They (the ABC) decided to revive it after my comments about the ABC."

A spokesman for the broadcaster denied the two were linked, however, with the bullying allegations put to Mr Pearson by the ABC in the weeks before he levelled bias allegations at the ABC.

"ABC News journalists have been investigating and reporting matters relating to Mr Noel Pearson and education policy on Cape York for some time," the spokesman said.

“Correspondence with Mr Pearson’s office regarding today’s allegations, for example, was - received on November 8, well before his recent comments about the ABC.”

Allegations about bullying claims made against Mr Pearson, involving politicians and bureaucrats, date back to 2012 and have previously been reported by *The Australian*.

Despite their relationship breaking down in recent weeks, Mr Pearson and Ms Jones are continuing negotiations about the future operations of Cape York Academy schools in Coen and Hope Vale.

Mr Pearson walked away from the Aurukun school earlier this month following intervention by Ms Jones’ department after a government review and audit, sparked by a series of violent incidents.

Ms Jones, who was targeted by Mr Pearson’s brother over the former Bligh government’s Wild Rivers laws when she lost her seat of Ashgrove to former premier Campbell Newman, backed the ABC report.

The minister insisted her department would move forward with Mr Pearson and his Good to Great Schools Australia organisation as they negotiate terms for the Coen and Hope Vale schools.

“It happened seven years ago,” Ms Jones said of the alleged exchange, which was also reported in 2012.

“The language that Noel Pearson uses is a choice for Noel Pearson. I’ve been around politics a long time. I am used to robust language. I have moved on. I am sure Noel Pearson has moved on. This is a distraction from the main game.”

A spokeswoman for Mr Pearson said his brother Gerhardt and Pru Gusmerini, who were at the 2009 meeting, corroborated that “during the meeting all of the conversation by Noel was directed at Stephen Robertson, the then natural resources minister, whose Wild Rivers legislation was later overturned by the Federal Court on the basis that his government had not followed correct procedure in enacting the legislation”.

Mr Pearson’s brother Gerhardt yesterday urged Ms Jones to release details of the meeting and linked yesterday’s ABC story about bullying allegations with the political campaign he led against the Wild Rivers legislation in Ashgrove.

She was voted out at that election but won her seat back last year.

“I led a No Wild Rivers Cape York campaign with the former mayor of Aurukun against Kate Jones in her seat of Ashgrove in 2012,” he said.