

# Warren Mundine says Noel Pearson's Declaration of Recognition is 'dangerous'

- [THE AUSTRALIAN](#)
- JUNE 07, 2015 10:21PM
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Warren Mundine says an alternative plan to the referendum on the constitutional recognition of First Australians devised by Noel Pearson is “radical” and “very dangerous”. *Source: News Corp Australia*

**The chairman of the Prime minister's Indigenous Advisory Council Warren Mundine has denounced an alternative plan to the referendum on the constitutional recognition of First Australians devised by prominent indigenous lawyer Noel Pearson as “radical” and “very dangerous”.**

In April, Mr Pearson rejected “symbolic” changes to the Constitution in favour of an “Australian Declaration of Recognition” akin to the United States declaration of independence.

The document should sit outside the constitution and be formed alongside a national Indigenous representative body to advise Federal Parliament on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, he said.

“It is moving into a very strange area,” Mr Mundine told Sky News. “Name any other race of people that will have a body set up in the constitution looking after them.”

Aboriginal academic Professor Marcia Langton has supported the idea as “a solution to the problem of our status as an extreme minority” but Mr Mundine disagreed.

“I have a legislative body and it is called the NSW parliament and the Commonwealth parliament,” he said.

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The nation’s founding document is not the place for “poetry and symbolism”, Cape York leader Mr Pearson has argued, but Mr Mundine thinks tinkering with the preamble of the constitution would be significant for the future of indigenous Australians.

“When you start going into these areas that Noel wants to go into, you start to go into very dangerous and radical grounds,” he said.

Many “myths” followed the successful 1967 referendum which saw Aboriginal Australians included in the census and gave the Commonwealth power to create laws for them, he said.

“We had citizenship and voting rights before that,” Mr Mundine said.

He described the changes that followed that referendum as “very minimal, tiny steps forward”.

“But a massive step forward into the way Australia felt after that,” he said.

Mr Mundine likened the current state of the debate about constitutional recognition to discussions which took place in the lead up to the unsuccessful 1999 referendum on republicanism as “the intellectuals and the academics are starting to take over”.

These additional opinions were crowding the debate and threatening the triumph of an impending referendum, he said.

“Australian people don’t vote for things that are radical,” he said.

Last month Tony Abbott called for a bipartisan summit of Indigenous leaders on July 6 to discuss the timing and wording of the referendum which has been welcomed by those in the RECOGNISE movement.

