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Age

## Talks open with a challenge

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The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Chaney, was challenged on the Noonkanbah issue in an unexpected step before the official opening of the conference.

Aboriginal activist ~~Mr Gary~~ <sup>DOH</sup> Foley chalked up on the main conference room blackboard a question for the senator.

It read: "Why doesn't Fred Chaney use the constitutional authority given to the Commonwealth in 1967 to stop the WA Government from provoking the worst confrontation between black and white Australians in history? Victory to the Noonkanbah people. Answer: (space reserved for senator ("call me Fred") Chaney's reply).

It is unlikely Senator Chaney will use the blackboard space provided to reply. When approached by 'The Age' for comment, Senator Chaney said Mr Foley's statement showed a "dependence on hyperbole".

He said the history of most Australian States was "studded with the most horrible confrontations" between white and black Australians. "Obviously Noonkanbah is a serious issue. But this is not a conference about today's issues. It is an attempt to look at the longer-term view of Australia."

For the first two and a half days of the five-day conference the participants will be divided into four pre-selected discussion groups of 30. As it happens, Senator Chaney and Mr Foley have been allotted the same discussion group.