

Pearson joins chorus of support for Anderson

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Noel Pearson has called on the Northern Territory government to use Aboriginal minister Alison Anderson's landmark speech on welfare dependency as a framework to begin welfare reform.

The founder of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership said the conditional welfare approach he pioneered, which the commonwealth was trialling elsewhere in the country, had been successful but was "only half the battle".

"I think the vision Ms Anderson has is one that will necessitate deeper reforms than conditional welfare," Mr Pearson told *The Weekend Australian* last night.

"We live in a country where it's much more comfortable, and young people are systematically making calculations that life is more leisurely on welfare than in the real economy.

"Welfare has infantilised indigenous people, as it does any people."

Indigenous leaders lined up yesterday to endorse the NT Minister for Indigenous Advancement and Regional Development's call on Thursday for welfare dependents to "grow up" and stop resorting to the "dangerous conversation of endless complaint".

Chris Sarra, a leading indigenous educator with the Stronger Smarter Institute, said Ms Anderson was "respectfully challenging Aboriginal Australians to step up and be active members of a modern society".

"I will stand by her in her challenge," Dr Sarra said.

Marie Ellis, president of the Imwernkwerne Community Council in the central Australian community of Amoonguna, called on Aboriginal people to "snap out of it" and "take responsibility" for their lives. "We need to step up and do something for ourselves," she said. "I got educated because of the sacrifices my mother made. Now people just sit down and say 'do everything for us'."

Bobby Nunggumajbarr, a senior figure in the Arnhem Land community of Ngukurr, said Ms Anderson's comments were "exactly what" local leaders were already saying.