

Industry leaders in 'the indigenous dozen'

EXCLUSIVE

PATRICIA KARVELAS

TONY Abbott has recruited 12 of the most powerful business and indigenous figures in the country to provide advice on Aboriginal economic reform, including Westpac chief executive Gail Kelly and Rio Tinto managing director David Peever.

The *Weekend Australian* has obtained the full list of Mr Abbott's hand-picked appointees to the Prime Minister's indigen-

ous council, which will be led by Aboriginal leader Warren Mundine and give him bold ideas to closing the disadvantage gap.

The membership is stacked with people who have business and reform experience, with the Prime Minister deliberately steering away from the usual faces in indigenous affairs.

Other appointees include Andrew Penfold, the chief executive of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, which provides scholarships for indigenous children to attend elite schools, and, as foreshadowed in *The Australian*, Peter Shergold,

chancellor of the University of Western Sydney and former secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Mrs Kelly described being asked to join the council as an honour and said she was grateful for the opportunity to contribute.

"My goal is to work with council members to drive actions to improve education, health and employment in indigenous communities," the Westpac chief executive said.

"Corporate Australia has an important role to play in doing more for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

Leading indigenous members will include Richie Ah Mat, who is involved in the Cape York Welfare Reform agenda, and Bruce Martin, a Wik man from Aurukun and chief executive of Aak Puul Ngantam, an organisation that represents families in Cape York. Mr Abbott has also invited a giant of the reconciliation movement, Leah Armstrong, a Torres Strait Islander who is the chief executive of Reconciliation Australia.

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Captains of industry lead Abbott's indigenous dozen

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However, Cape York leader Noel Pearson is not on the powerful council. *The Weekend Australian* can reveal he was approached prior to the election about participating but told Mr Abbott he had other priorities.

"I told the Prime Minister ... my preference was to work on school reforms for the benefit of disadvantaged children generally, rather than indigenous people alone," Mr Pearson said.

"I think poor white kids deserve a good education as much as our

own kids. I think Warren Mundine will do a good job leading the council on indigenous policy."

Ngiare Brown, one of the first group of Aboriginal medical graduates in Australia, will participate, as will Kalgoorlie indigenous man Daniel Tucker, who is managing director of Carey Mining, the largest 100 per cent indigenous, privately owned and managed contracting company in Australia.

Koori woman Josephine Cashman, managing director and founder of Riverview Global Partners, has also been invited.

Indigenous artist Djambawa Marawili of the Yolngu people will also have a seat at the table.

A spokeswoman for Mr Abbott said that in choosing members, the Prime Minister — in consultation with Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion, parliamentary secretary on indigenous affairs Alan Tudge and Mr Mundine — considered both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians from all parts of Australia.

"The council brings a diversity of views and experience to the task of ensuring our programs achieve real, positive change in the lives of

Aboriginal people — changes that can increase participation, preserve Aboriginal culture and build reconciliation," the spokeswoman said.

"To do this we must ensure that children go to school, adults go to work and that the ordinary law of the land operates in Aboriginal communities."

The council will meet three times a year with the Prime Minister and senior ministers, starting next month, and will inform the policy implementation of the government.

Mr Mundine said the council

needed corporate heavyweights to deliver big reforms.

"Each member of the council brings skills, experiences and knowledge that we need to meet our terms of reference and end the disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous Australia," the former ALP national president said.

Mr Tudge said: "This is an exceptionally capable group of individuals. They bring a wealth of experience including knowing what it takes to attract and support indigenous people into jobs, so critical to ending the disparity."

ABBOTT'S INDIGENOUS ADVISORY PANEL

WARREN MUNDINE

From NSW a former Labor Party president and has worked as the chief executive of the NSW Native Title Service. Also worked for Andrew Forrest's indigenous employment project GenerationOne



NGIARE BROWN

From NSW south coast. One of the first group of Aboriginal medical graduates in Australia. Dr Brown has previously been indigenous health adviser to the federal Australian Medical Association and was foundation chief executive of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association



DANIEL TUCKER

From Kalgoorlie. Founder and managing director of Carey Mining, the largest 100 per cent indigenous, privately owned and managed contracting company in Australia



JOSEPHINE CASHMAN

Descendant of Worimi people of NSW. The managing director and founder of Riverview Global Partners and has worked in private, government and not-for-profit sectors



BRUCE MARTIN

Wik man from Aurukun. Chief executive of Aak Puul Ngantam, a Cape York organisation representing families of Watson River south to the Kendall River



LEAH ARMSTRONG

Torres Strait Islander. Chief executive of Reconciliation Australia. Previously established a not-for-profit company called Yarnteen. Recognised in the 2012 AFR/Westpac 100 Women of Influence awards



DJAMBAWA MARAWILI

Indigenous artist of the Yolngu people. In 1996, won the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award Best Bark Painting prize. Also the chairman of the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Land Aboriginal Artists



RICHE AH MAT

From Cape York and currently involved in the Cape York Welfare Reform agenda. Worked for Comalco Mining in Weipa for 27 years. Also served as chairman of the Cape York Land Council



GAIL KELLY

Managing director and chief executive of Westpac. Co-founder of Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships and non-executive director of the Business Council of Australia



ANDREW PENFOLD

Current chief executive of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation. Previously, had a successful career in international law and finance. Awarded an Order of Merit by the Australian Institute of Company Directors



DAVID PEEVER

Managing director of Rio Tinto Australia. Also the chairman of the Business Council of Australia's economic policy and competitiveness committee



PETER SHERGOLD

Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney. Also a current board member of the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence and a former secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Prior to this, he was chief executive of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

