

**Cashman sacked over Pascoe claims - Australian, The /Weekend Australian, The /Australian Magazine, The (Australia) - January 29, 2020 - page 2**

January 29, 2020 | Australian, The/Weekend Australian, The/Australian Magazine, The (Australia) | PAIGE TAYLOR, INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT | Page 2

Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt has sacked his one-time friend and ally Josephine Cashman amid a furious debate over Aboriginal identity.

Ms Cashman on Tuesday lost her position on the senior advisory group overseeing the design of an indigenous voice to government, seven weeks after she asked Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton for an investigation into author **Bruce Pascoe** for “dishonesty offences”.

Mr Wyatt was said to have been blindsided by Ms Cashman’s email to Mr Dutton on December 11 in which she alleged that Professor Pascoe had gained a financial benefit by wrongly claiming to be Aboriginal.

Mr Wyatt learned about her complaint in The Weekend Australian on January 11, after Mr Dutton had referred it to the Australian Federal Police.

Since then, The Australian has learned, members of the senior advisory group became increasingly concerned that Ms Cashman’s public criticism of Professor Pascoe was divisive and detracting from their work.

Ms Cashman’s push to set up a national register of indigenous Australians as a way of confirming identity also drew criticism. “Following recent discussions with the Senior Advisory Group co-chairs, Professor Dr Marcia Langton AM and Professor Tom Calma AO, and after careful consideration, I have decided that Ms Cashman’s membership of the group is no longer tenable,” Mr Wyatt said in an email to reporters on Tuesday.

“Ms Cashman’s actions are not conducive to the constructive and collaborative approach required to progress the important co-design process for an indigenous voice.” The Australian has been told that Ms Cashman’s future on the senior advisory group was considered untenable last Thursday after the AFP confirmed it had completed its assessment of her complaint against Professor Pascoe and identified no commonwealth offence.

Having identified no financial benefit on the material Ms Cashman provided, the AFP did not probe Professor Pascoe’s ancestry.

The Australian has been told Ms Cashman’s sacking was imminent when a debate erupted on Monday night over the authenticity of a letter that Ms Cashman gave to Sky commentator Andrew Bolt, which he published on his blog.

Said to have been from Northern Territory elder Terry Yumbulul, it was critical of the thesis of Professor Pascoe’s bestseller *Dark Emu*, which draws on the historical accounts of early settlers to call for a rethink of the hunter-gatherer label for pre-colonial Aboriginal people. “It would have been

impossible for my people to have built wells, silos, houses and yards to pen animals, as Pascoe promotes," the letter states.

Mr Yumbulul later told NITV: "I did not say anything of the sort to write the letter on behalf of me." Ms Cashman said on Sky on Tuesday that Mr Yumbulul had approved a final draft of the letter.

Bolt said Mr Yumbulul and his wife, Clely, were cc'd on several drafts and he published emails that he said showed they had replied with corrections.

Professor Pascoe is described on the back cover of his latest book, *Salt*, as a Bunurong man.

He is accepted as Aboriginal by Mr Wyatt and other prominent indigenous Australians, including Professor Langton, the co-chair of the senior advisory group. On Bolt's program on Sky on Tuesday night, Ms Cashman said: "There is a group of Aboriginal elites that decide who is Aboriginal and who is not, and people on the ground have had a gutful of it." Professor Pascoe writes about claims he is "not really Aboriginal" in *Salt*. "What they say has cool logic. Clinical analysis of genes says I'm more **Cornish** than Koori," he writes. The Australian has been told Ms Cashman's co-operative working relationship with Bolt was considered especially problematic after he described Mr Wyatt as "a man unfit to be a minister".

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