

Catholic Bishops say that forcibly extinguishing Native Title to lands would be wrong and futile

The dispossession of indigenous peoples from the time of European settlement has left our Australian nation a legacy of many complex and vexed questions.

The recent decision in the Wik case has brought about a renewed tension among conflicting economic, social and spiritual interests, particularly of indigenous peoples and those holding pastoral leases.

We believe that these difficult issues, which affect the whole nation as we work towards a genuine reconciliation, can be solved only by dialogue and negotiation in pursuit of the common good.

We recognise the need that all parties have for security of title. It would be wrong and futile to try to obtain such security by forcibly extinguishing native title to lands. It would also be wrong to try to solve the present impasse by weakening the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Catholic community embraces Aboriginal peoples, those holding pastoral leases and others with competing claims. As leaders of that community we realise that many are suffering great anxiety in the present situation.

We urge all to pray and work for peace and harmony in promoting the national well-being now and in the future.

-To arrange an interview with spokesman, Bishop Kevin MANNING please contact:Jackie Brady on 0418) 214 752