

MEDIA RELEASE

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Native title decisions confirm need for negotiated solutions.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) have called for negotiated solutions to native title issues following today's High Court decisions on the Miriuwung-Gajerrong and NSW Western Division Leases cases.

"It's a tragedy that these issues have been mired in the courts for so long, principally because of the failure of the Howard Government to adopt a negotiated approach to native title, and instead pursue racially discriminatory amendments to the Native Title Act", ANTaR National President, Phil Glendenning said today.

"And still many issues remain unresolved, having been referred back to the Federal Court.

"John Howard's 10-point plan lies in tatters – an abject failure even on it's own terms. It's delivered certainty to no-one.

"These cases continue to demonstrate the arbitrary and unjust fate of native title rights under Australia's legal and land tenure systems.

"Clearly the courts are not the place to resolve these issues. But with the lack of political leadership, claimants are left with no option but to pursue or defend their native title rights in the courts.

"What is required are negotiated solutions that recognise that a coexistence of Indigenous and non-indigenous interests is not only possible, but a desirable outcome. That would be real reconciliation in action.

"ANTaR calls on the Federal Government to rethink its approach to native title and to embark on meaningful negotiations with Indigenous peoples to secure solutions that properly respect Indigenous rights and interests, and that provide Indigenous communities with the means to address economic and social disadvantage", Mr Glendenning concluded.

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