

## Doctrines of *Terra Nullius*

(A report from the Social Issues Committee.)

1. The Standing Committee asked the Social Issues Committee to prepare a report to enable the Synod and parishes to respond to General Synod resolution 31/95 on the Doctrine of *Terra Nullius*.
2. By resolution 31/95 the General Synod resolved that it -
  - "(i) acknowledges the historical existence of *Terra Nullius*, 'a land belonging to no-one,' or 'an empty land', and therefore General Synod fully supports the ruling of the High Court of Australia where, on 3 June 1992, the High Court ruled that the enlarged notion of *Terra Nullius* be no longer held to apply in Australia;
  - (ii) believes it is the deeper questions of attitudes which really lie at the heart of social injustice, attitudes on the part of one people toward another people;
  - (iii) states that just as God has accorded dignity to all human life, so must we; and
  - (iv) requests each diocese to address the whole issue of *Terra Nullius* together with the questions of attitude and common dignity as raised under this motion at their next diocesan synod, and that each diocesan synod request its bishops to ask that parishes take action on these issues."
3. In response to this request, the Social Issues Committee has arranged for Southern Cross Newspaper, which is made available to church members within the Diocese, to carry a series of 4 articles on this theme during the year. Two of these have been printed, and the next is due in the October issue.
4. The Social Issues Committee has further promoted the availability of Services of Reconciliation for use within parishes.
5. The Social Issues Committee acknowledges and affirms those who are promoting that process whereby Aboriginal people are invited to local parishes and asked to tell their stories to non-Aboriginal people as a personal face-to-face approach to reconciliation.
6. The Social Issues Committee has also written a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Native Title indicating the dilemma that no claimant application for Native Title has yet been successful, despite the Native Tribunal having been in existence since 1993, and seeking amendments to the legislation and procedures of the Tribunal that would make its processes more accessible, particularly to remote Aboriginal groups who are in some cases under-resourced.

For and on behalf of the Social Issues Committee

BOAK JOBBINS  
*Chairman*

15 July 1996