

# SEMINAR SERIES



The Centre for Dialogue,  
La Trobe University



Centre for Dialogue  
— A Centre of La Trobe University —

presents

## Consensus Building Revisited:

Insights from a dialogue process developed in Japan

with

Michael Seigel

As the idea of citizen engagement in political decision-making has become widely accepted, the need for some form of consensus decision-making has become recognized. However, in many cases, differences are so deep that anything even approaching consensus seems impossible. Professor Toshio Kuwako of the Tokyo Institute of Technology argues that it is in precisely these cases that a consensus building process is necessary. For one thing, it is important that those who are unhappy with the outcome of a decision-making process should still be happy with the decision-making process itself. Further, by getting to the reasons behind people's positions, it is possible to find points of agreement that will constitute an important contribution to the decision-making in these difficult cases. The presentation will spell out the implications of Professor Kuwako's ideas for citizen engagement in decision-making and for dialogue on intractable issues in general.



**Michael Seigel** was born in 1947 and grew up in Barooga, southern New South Wales. Ordained a Catholic priest in 1972, he took up an assignment in Japan in 1973. In the 1980s, he was involved in activities to help Indochinese refugees settle into Japan and in the establishment of an overseas volunteer program for Japanese Catholics. He taught courses on Christian faith and social and environmental issues at Nanzan University on a part time basis, and in 1989 undertook doctoral studies at Birmingham University (U.K.), where he used the thought of a Japanese Taoist thinker (Masanobu Fukuoka) as a standpoint from which to critique Christian attitudes towards nature and the environmental crisis. From 1995 to 2001, he served as the Justice and Peace Coordinator at the headquarters of the Society of the Divine Word in Rome. He has been permanent research fellow at the Nanzan University Institute for Social Ethics since 2003.

THURSDAY 23RD FEBRUARY  
12:30 - 2:00PM

CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE  
SEMINAR ROOM 301

SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING  
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