



Creating a Safe Supportive Environment

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Terra Nullius, the Australian Dream and the House of Lords

A new approach to recognising Aboriginal Australia's colonial nightmare will be discussed in the House of Lords this week as a leading Australian psychoanalytic psychotherapist, Ms Pamela Nathan, joins Lord John Alderdice to present work being done in Central Australia that is embracing ancient practices in order to find a way forward.

The presentation is being hosted by Lord Alderdice, who has taken an active role in the work and, in doing so, uncovered a living link with Australia's colonial and Aboriginal history.

"Australia has the incredible privilege of being home to the world's longest continuing culture," said Ms Nathan. "Yet the world of Aboriginal people is in catastrophic crisis."

Ms Nathan cites the following as evidence of the crisis:

- suicide rates for Aboriginal people that are at least twice the rate for non-Aboriginal people, with Aboriginal males comprising 91% of suicides between the ages of 25-29
- Aboriginal people comprising less than 3% of Australia's population, but accounting for 25% of the prison population

"Alice Springs, in the centre of Australia and with a high Aboriginal population, is known as the 'stabbing capital of the world'. The statistics around domestic violence are horrifying," she continues.

Ms Nathan is the Director of CASSE, an organisation that has adopted a new approach to addressing the violence and problems that are so rife within Aboriginal communities. The approach hinges on taking psychoanalytic principles - usually the domain of the private consulting room - and applying them to entire communities.

"When Captain Cook landed in 1770 and colonial law was enshrined in 1778, Australia was declared Terra Nullius - a land of nobodies. Aboriginal people were not declared citizens until 1967, just 48 years ago."

"In order to move forward, we must address the injustices of the past and recognise the remarkable culture that was, and still is, very much alive in Australia," explained Ms Nathan. "That is what we do at CASSE - we work with Aboriginal people and communities to find a way to survive the cultural collision and live in two very different worlds."

"Our focus is on changing minds in order to save lives. Until we can do this as a society, with tangible outcomes such as Constitutional Recognition, the Australian dream will remain elusive... and continue to cast a shadow that is a racist nightmare. "

**Pamela Nathan will be presenting in conversation with Lord Alderdice at the House of Lords on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> of February, and at Oxford on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February and is available for media interviews.**

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**Pamela Nathan** is a forensic and clinical psychologist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist and is the Director of CASSE's Aboriginal Australian Relations Program, working on violence and trauma with Aboriginal organisations, communities and people in central Australia.

**CASSE (Creating A Safe Supportive Environment)** works to create safe, supportive environments for individuals, families and communities through psychoanalytic awareness.