



The WHAT The WHY and The HOW

Kurunna Mwarre “Make My Spirit Inside Me Good”

KEY POINTS

1. **What is the way to go forward and how to live without violence and trauma and HOW can *kurunna mwarre* be found?**
2. The purpose of CASSE is to promote safe, supportive environments through the psychoanalytic understandings of the emotional, psychic and social worlds of individuals, families and communities.
3. The Aboriginal Program works with Aboriginal people in the here and now to understand and process the emotional experiences of psychic pain, trauma and violence thereby “making my spirit inside me good”.
4. **Listen:** to **what are the stories of the problem lives of Aboriginal people?**
5. **Hear:** Why Aboriginal people are living problem lives?
6. **Understand:** How to think about the how in terms of individual and community change and then government change?

**At the whiteman’s school
What are our children taught?
Are they told of the battles our people fought?
Are they told how our people died?
Are they told why our people cried?
Australia’s true history is never read
But the black man keeps it in his head.**

1995-poem by Rob Riley

CASSE APPROACH

1. CASSE works to help organisations and communities to create **safe and supportive** environments, and focuses on **trauma** underlying violence.
2. CASSE focuses on the **underlying**, and often **hidden**, causes, meanings and understandings of problems and violence.
3. CASSE says that generations of trauma and dispossession underlie the continuing feelings of LOSS, disempowerment and helplessness and the actions of violence. It can give rise to feeling lost, to feelings of chaos and confusion.
4. CASSE aims to work together with Congress and the central Australian Aboriginal communities by helping them to talk, feel, listen, **think** and find cultural ways to heal together from their traumas and sorry business and be strong again.
5. To **achieve change** at an individual, family and community level, CASSE says that **talking about feelings and sharing feelings** or **emotional experiencing** is essential to learning and knowing and moving forward.
6. CASSE says that **containment and boundaries** are essential to holding disturbance and distress and violence.
7. CASSE knows that many people including government think that Aboriginal self-determination has failed and this is a frightening situation as you maybe afraid to try again and maybe afraid of failing. **CASSE does not think Aboriginal people have failed.** The important thing is to try and maybe **a community spirit of healing and renewal can be found.**
8. CASSE will also help Congress and communities to **understand** what are some of the **barriers** that have stopped them from **fixing** the problems of **violence and conflict.**
9. In this way CASSE and Congress can work together to help individuals, families and communities *Kurrinna Mwarre: Make my spirit inside me good and settle down country the way Aboriginal people want to move forward.*

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

- Move forward by facing hard realities of problem lives (cultural dispossession and breakdown) and find ways of moving forward.
- Increase **community awareness of trauma** and the link with violence
- Make a talking space for feelings and thinking and ongoing conversations
- Develop strategies to stop violence and help communities build capacity and change and heal.
- Develop some ideas for some **pilot projects** to be run by congress.

THE WHAT, THE WHY and THE HOW?

The WHAT: what are the stories of the problem lives of Aboriginal people?

For example:

- Too much sadness and sorry business
- Too much fights and violence
- Too much suicide
- Rubbish country. Spirits not in its proper place anymore
- People not happy. People go crazy. Too much sadness
- Too much stress and worries
- Too much grog and dope
- Too much kids not listening
- Too much TV
- Too much killing.
- Too much paining.
- Too much sickness
- Too much badness
- No proper law
- And more

THE WHY: Why are Aboriginal people living problem lives?

For example:

- Colonisation and its impact on all aspects of life
- Cultural onslaught and catastrophe and domination
- Many losses
 - lands to cattle and pastoralists and government
 - nomadic way of life across these lands
 - hunting and gathering way of life
 - old time laws and old time beliefs and practices
 - the old time way of being, way of thinking and traditional *altyerre*.

This gives rise to:

- Trauma and pain
- Rapid change
 - Missions and settlements
 - White man's food including flour and sugar and drink tea
 - Speaking English
 - Watching tv
 - Drinking grog
 - White law courts and prisons

This results in:

- The young people want to live in the whiteman's world. The old time world does not make sense to them in terms of how to live and learn and work in the Whiteman's world and the older generation can lose them.
- A loss of identity and a confusion of what it means to be Aboriginal today
- A loss of a future and loss of hope and despair
- A lot of conflict and trouble between us bush people and town people, between the old and the young and between different family and skin groups and too much drowning the pain with grog.
- There has been a loss of belief and a change in values-what does it mean to be a stong man today or to have a good life?

But there has been resilience and imagination and strength!

Aboriginal people:

- Have held on to our lands
- Still hunt and gather and live on our lands
- Still have ceremony
- Still have law
- Have kinship and families
- Have learned some of the ways of the whiteman
- Have learned to live in two worlds
- Have our schools
- Have our Aboriginal organisations
- Have our strength, resilience and imagination
- Have weathered many storms and floods

What are the barriers?

Psychological

- -People live in despair, helplessness, powerlessness, distress and ongoing sorry business
- -People live with generations of trauma
- -People act out their trauma with violence
- -People fight
- -People numb themselves with grog and drugs

Cultural

- Domination of white culture
- -Cultural devastation and loss
- -Living in two worlds
- -The losing of cultural beliefs and practices
- -The loss of meaning and relevance of some of these beliefs and practices
- -New meanings emerging

Legal

- Dominant white law
- -Customary law not recognized-payback
- -People not understanding white law

Economic

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Low levels education

Political

- Intervention
- White govt essentially
- Erosion of local councils
- No strong Aboriginal leadership body

Health

- People sick with chronic illnesses and substances

THE HOW: How to think about the how in terms of individual and community change and then government change?

Questions to consider:

- How can Aboriginal people go forward in two worlds?
- How can Aboriginal people to go on living in the world of today?
- How do Aboriginal people face the new realities?
- How can Aboriginal people have a good life?
- How can Aboriginal people be strong and courageous?
- How can Aboriginal people show good judgment and respect?
- How can Aboriginal people show good leadership?
- How can Aboriginal people live strengthen families and communities?
- How can Congress strengthen its community of staff?
- How do Aboriginal people restore, revive and reclaim their identity?
- How can Aboriginal people live with hope and a future?

- How can Aboriginal people listen to their people and take responsibility?
- How can Aboriginal people make a safe environment for our children from violence and trauma.
- How can Aboriginal people give their children a future the Aboriginal way?

There is a big question

What is the way to go forward and how to live without violence and trauma and HOW can *kurunna mwarre* be found?

How to change?

- **Settle down** that country.
- Make **that spirit strong**.

This resource and further information about Creating A Safe Supportive Environment is available to download at www.casse.org.au/resources.

CASSE Australia Inc
PO Box 156
Kew VIC 3101
T 0450 540 366
www.casse.org.au