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## Go bush and think, Greer urges `whitefellas`

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"The whitefellas", according to Germaine Greer, need to sit down, connect with the country a little, go bush and spend time in it. Then keep on reconsidering its future.

The expatriate feminist icon and academic yesterday launched *Whitefella Jump Up, The Shortest Way To Nationhood*, her 20,000-word plea for an Aboriginal republic in the latest *Quarterly Essay* journal.

It was, she wrote, a "modest suggestion" not a definitive study. But it is also her utopian vision for Australia where the white population is being slowly seduced into an Aboriginal "web of dreams". It has already been branded nonsense by Aboriginal leader Michael Mansell. He said black and white Australia had always been two nations. Not that such barbs would put Greer off. She's made a life, and a household name, out of contrary idealism.

"Get out of your car," she said. "Get off your trail bike, get out of your four-wheel-drive, which you smash down the foreshore with, get out of the vehicle, get off the Jet-ski, stop racing around. Sit down. Sit on the ground. And think. Think about it. Think about the country."

In his introduction to her piece, *Quarterly Essay* editor Peter Craven wrote that the image of humbly sitting on Australian soil recalled Cathy Freeman after her win at the Sydney Olympics. "Didn't we know, without thinking about it, that she was one of our own . . . (that she) knew the land as her own?"

Greer, 64, said *Whitefella Jump Up* inverted the normal way of thinking. It was the same idea that spawned *The Female Eunuch*, her groundbreaking treatise on feminism in 1970.

"People were going about saying women have been sexualised, they've been sent back into the home, they're not allowed to be thrusting and forward looking and dynamic and energetic, and I just thought it was absolutely the wrong way around because we had been de-sexualised, we had been castrated."

She said "instead of thinking about the blackfella as the whitefella's problem", turn the accepted wisdom around and realise that "the whitefella is the unmanageable one. We are the ones in terminal social decline".

Evidence of this were environmental degradation and salinity, ignorance of Australia's biodiversity, the Government's "renegade" stance on the Kyoto protocol on global warming and uranium mining at Jabiluka.

She also blamed migrants' sadness. "The problem is that we're not at home. We always think of using the country as if it existed for an ulterior purpose."

To Greer things like the male drinking culture, the white view of the outback as empty and even "misunderstanding" Aboriginal art were symptoms of a greater malaise. But now white Australia was being drawn closer to black Australia. Many white traits - egalitarianism, evasiveness and social segregation of the sexes - were due to contact with Aborigines.

Mr Craven said at yesterday's launch that the essay would "set the cat amongst the pigeons".

"I can't remember the first time I said to myself Australia is an Aboriginal country," Greer said. "I think I always knew it. Aborigines have been struggling to civilise us for 200 years."