



## Kylie Kennedy

Born August 1980 in Ballarat

### Student of Wergaia

Kylie was born in Ballarat (Wathurong land) but is descended from the Wotjobaluk people. The traditional 'lost' language of her people is Wergaia.

In 2006, Kylie commenced study with a linguist to learn and reconstruct her Wergaia language with a number of her extended family. In 2008, she passed the study course with her dad, two aunties, three cousins, her sister and her dad's cousin. Reconstructing the language means adding new words that are in use today and requires complex phonetics and linguistics.

Kylie grew up with little or no knowledge or experience of her culture, not through any fault of her family, but more shame and self-protection and not understanding how culture would help in her life.

Kylie now has new confidence and immense pride in her heritage. She has a stronger sense of identity and believes she has a language that makes her unique. Kylie cannot wait to hand on her culture to her own children one day.

At school Kylie soon learnt to 'not talk about her Aboriginality' as a cousin was teased, although her close friends knew. At secondary school there was a separate class each week for the Indigenous kids run by the Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Kylie found this awkward and they were labelled. Conversely, in another class, a very brief Aboriginal history was being taught in a way that presumed there weren't any Aboriginal kids in the class. This made Kylie angry and she stood up and proudly stated her Aboriginality.

At the University of Ballarat, where Kylie studied for a psychology degree and a post graduate degree she underwent a change. The Aboriginal Education Centre was a safe, supportive place in an alien world and she achieved great success.

Kylie is now a provisional psychologist working in the Men's Behaviour Change Program at Child and Family Services, Ballarat.

In her nominators words, *"As an amateur student of Indigenous history, I appreciate Kylie's effort to learn her language and her journey to this point in her life. I believe she is very worthy of being one of Ballarat's Great Women"*.