



Inspiring Hearts and Minds: Kylie's transformative journey through education.



Kylie Captain's journey from a young girl facing adversity to becoming the Director of Dream Big Education Wellbeing and Consulting is an inspiring testament to the power of education.

Born and raised on Gadigal Country, the Gamilaroi woman's trajectory showcases the profound impact a dedicated teacher can have on a student's life.

"My story is one empowered by education".

"I often say that I live a life of freedom and choice thanks to the difference a teacher made on me, and the opportunities education has provided me," says Kylie.

Kylie's story begins with the pivotal role played by Ms Cathie Burgess, (now Dr Cathie Burgess), her Year 11 and 12 Aboriginal Studies teacher who saw her potential during a critical moment in her life, soon becoming a catalyst for change.

"I found myself heading down a really negative path, a path of self-destruction where I was just not going anywhere, didn't really have any aspirations or in particular, role models that could show me the way or be that person for me that I could aspire to be," reflects Kylie.

Dr Burgess planted the seed of possibility by recognising Kylie's intelligence and encouraging her to explore her potential.

"Dr Burgess made a difference for me.

"She was the first teacher to ever tell me that I was smart and deadly. She made me feel like she meant it. I'll always remember how she made me feel," says Kylie.

Dr Burgess not only changed the trajectory of Kylie's life, but ignited her passion for education and desire to be that teacher who makes a difference. Dr Burgess continues to work closely with Kylie today, even co-writing a book together about the power of education and the difference a teacher can make in a student's life.

Kylie went on to complete a Bachelor of Education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, earning a place on the Dean's merit list over several years.

Her experience at Western Sydney University not only equipped her with the academic knowledge but also instilled a deep sense of empowerment.

"From a little girl who grew up never feeling good enough or smart enough... to do so well at university whilst working full time and raising my two young kids, was a big achievement.

"University can seem a little bit foreign; I didn't know anyone in my family or community that had actually been to university and got a degree.

"So for me, I was breaking these cycles and walking into these very foreign places for the first time.

"It just takes one person, and my kids, nieces, nephews and others can say, well, if Aunty Kylie can do it, then so can I," says Kylie.

Following her degree, Kylie ventured into the teaching profession, initially expecting to stay in the classroom.

However, her journey took an unexpected turn when she was encouraged to apply for leadership positions.

"Once I started teaching, I thought maybe I would spend the rest of my life there, but it wasn't to be.

"I was successful in securing a leadership position. It was going to be for a term, then a year and it continued. I loved supporting the improvement journey of many schools around Aboriginal Education in this role" says Kylie.

Kylie's passion for teaching remains unwavering as she knows how a good teacher and an education can change lives.

She now serves as president of the Aboriginal Studies Association and the director of Dream Big Education Wellbeing and Consultancy, channelling her experiences into transformative student and teacher programs.

Her focus is on supporting educators nationwide with teacher professional learning and empowering student programs.

"A lot of the work that I do is around relationships.

"It's about empowering our teachers to do what Cathie did for me.

As she continues her journey, Kylie remains committed to empowering teachers and students, fostering cultural understanding, and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"I always say to our educators, let's make learning fun and purposeful by teaching students everything they need to know around literacy and numeracy, but more importantly, let's make sure that we are creating good humans that have good social skills and big hearts and lots of care and compassion, particularly when learning and acknowledging about our histories and our cultures as well," says Kylie.

She hopes her story will inspire others to consider a career in teaching.

“Anyone who is considering a career in teaching, I always highly encourage it.

“There is a lot of heart, a lot of pride and lot of joy and purpose in teaching.

“When you get to the end of each day, each week, each term, each year, and see the difference that you've made to these kids – I can't even begin to describe how beautiful it is”.

To find out more about a rewarding career in teaching go to [BeThatTeacher.gov.au](https://www.bethatteacher.gov.au).