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# Kai's Story

## Journey to Feel Comfortable

by Kai Clancy

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**Being a kid was fine, I fitted in with the boys, but when I got to puberty, I got really depressed. My mates were changing and I was changing in a different way.**

**I** was given the name Kaitlyn when I was a baby, but I guess that isn't my name any more. My name is Kai now, I'm nineteen years old, and I'm from the Wakka Wakka and Wulli Wulli nations.

***For as long as I can remember, being separated by gender during ceremony and Corroboree would upset me because I was being taken away and put into a group where I didn't belong.***

My story is that I've always felt unhappy about being identified as a girl, I felt like I was in the wrong body. When I was seventeen I set out on a journey to feel comfortable and have my appearance reflect how I felt on the inside, so I transitioned from female to male.

It was a really difficult decision to start the process. It was my first year out of high school and those first six months were horrendous. I didn't know what was wrong with me. When you're in an institution that's so gendered, there are pressures to conform, but when you leave that, there's nothing. There are no

pressures and you can be yourself. But for me, being myself was really hard. That in-between period was really difficult. I kept asking myself, "How am I really going to do this?" It started to make sense, and I realised that I needed to do it for my own welfare. That's when I came out as transgender.

The reaction from my Indigenous community was okay. They've seen people who are male-to-female transgender, but they'd never seen female-to-male, so it was a bit foreign to them, but they've learned to understand it and accept it. Even though I still get called "sis" here (in Melbourne) and back at home.

I grew up in North Queensland and Townsville, and there were always a lot of blackfellas and family around me. Being a kid was fine, I fitted in with the boys, but when I got to puberty, I got really depressed. My mates were changing and I was changing in a different way. I remember thinking if I'm different from these guys, and I'm not one of those girls, then what the hell am I?

The other time I remember being segregated from my mates for being different physically was Corroboree. For as long as I can remember, being separated by gender during ceremony and Corroboree would upset me because I was being taken away and put into a group where I didn't belong. But I did it because that's what my elders told me to do.

When I decided to transition, I asked for their permission about ceremony and they gave me guidelines about what I could and couldn't do. Being older now I do gender-neutral dances where girls and guys dance at the same time. That's what I limit myself to these days. I'm still learning, it's still a journey, but it feels right.

I was four years old when my mum first thought I could be transgender. It was the first time I had come across someone who seemed to be transgender but they weren't, they were intersex. Their story was part of a 60 Minutes episode in 2000 about how surgical intervention is taken out on young intersex children and left them confused if they didn't identify with the gender assigned to them post-op. As a result they transitioned from their assigned gender to another — in this instance it was female to male. When I saw that, I asked mum if they did that (surgical intervention) to me when I was a baby. That was my understanding of transition, it didn't sit right with me. I was told intersex people had a medical reason to feel that way.

Before I transitioned I looked naturally feminine with long blonde hair, I was really petite. I told my friends about my feelings first and they didn't get it straight away, but the more they started to understand and take note of my behaviour the more it started to make sense that I was just different from them.

My own community in Queensland has been really supportive, and in Melbourne they're great. The Melbourne mob here didn't really know that I was transgender, they've always known me as Kai. For the Brisbane mob it's a bit different, they knew me as Kaitlyn and I think it's a bit hard for them to get their heads around it sometimes. But they're good, they're really supportive generally. All the Sistergirls and Brotherboys [names given to transgender Indigenous Australians and support groups] are really lovely, and some of them are like big sisters or cousins to me. They're role models, and they look out for me.

The transgender community knows discrimination when they see it, and it's very rare for them to discriminate against other people. They're pretty open about my Aboriginal identity and they accept it, no questions asked. But there are still some instances where there's a little bit of racism.

I've been making YouTube videos since I began my hormone replacement therapy. I love being able to show how much I've changed. It's good for me and it's good for other people too, I guess. I use it to document my progress and see all the differences in myself over time, but for other people it's a really good resource for motivation, and a referral tool for other people who might be going through the same thing.

Lots of transgender guys do those videos, the transition is so physical, and you can see the differences in hormone treatment over time. It's an amazing transition.

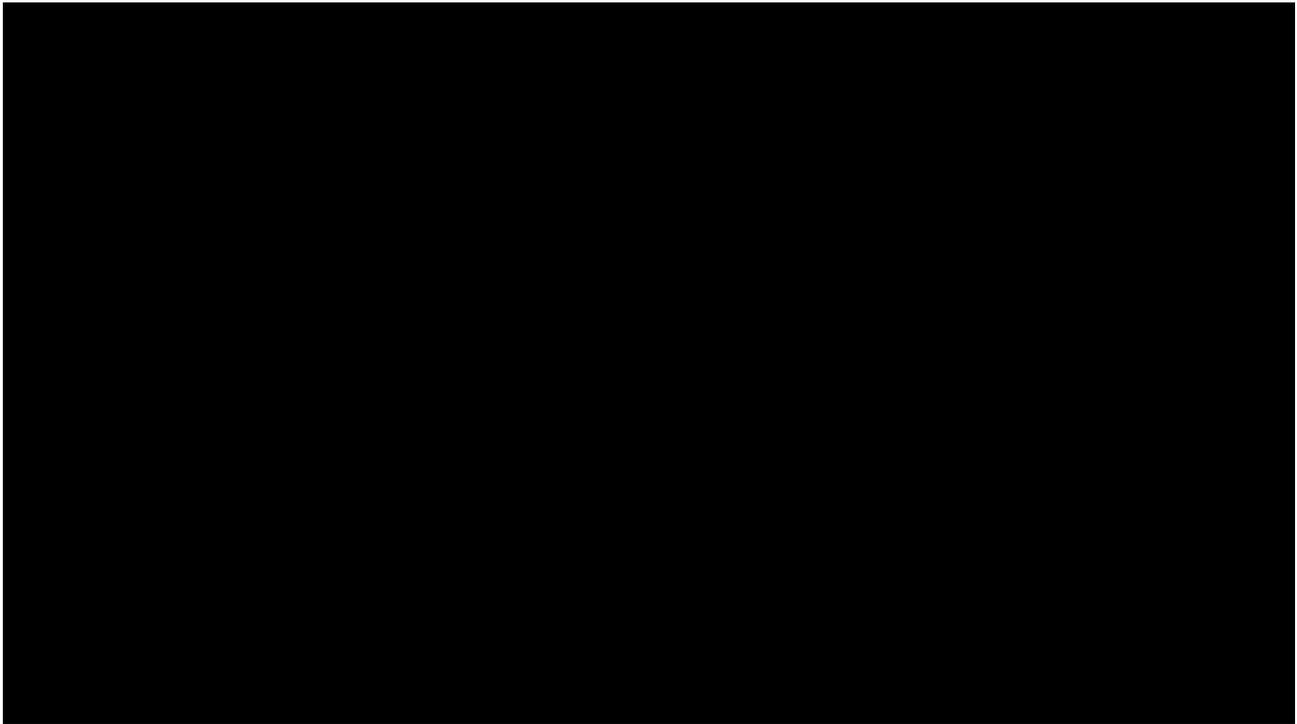
I've always been somewhat confident, my friends will tell you that. But I guess this confidence is more enhanced now because I'm more confident in myself. I was pushing myself beforehand, I used to force myself to be confident, now I feel like it comes naturally because I'm being who I am. There's less discomfort in myself, I feel like I'm more at one with myself, and I know who I really am now.

I'm living in Melbourne now and working at the Victorian Aids Council on an Aboriginal project. I've almost finished a political science degree, majoring in international relations and public policy, and I do a lot of Aboriginal politics stuff around the town, especially back in Brisbane, like the G20 and Invasion Day.

I really can't predict the future for myself. I just hope that I'm still happy. I am happy now.

## Kai Clancy

**From The Wheeler Centre website:**  Kai Clancy is 19 years old and was assigned female at birth. Kai is a Brotherboy (an Aboriginal transmasculine person); he comes from Wakka Wakka and Wulli Wulli nations. Kai has been heavily involved in Aboriginal politics in Brisbane. He is also a part of the newly formed collective WAR - Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance. Kai is a staunch advocate for aboriginal inclusivity and visibility in the transgender community.



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