Kaurna Miyurna
The History of a Name

April 2013, based on research by Dr Rob Amery

Kaurna ~Miyurna -- The History of a name

We believe that the name for the people of the Adelaide Plains and their language which is drawn from the language of the land is *Miyurna* 'people'.

It is the direct equivalent of *Kaurna* (= *Kornar*) 'people' which is drawn from the neighbouring Ngarrindjeri and Ramindjeri languages.
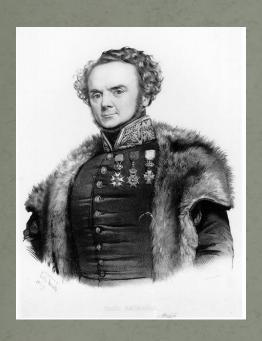
Miyurna 'people' means exactly the same thing as *Yolŋu, Tiwi, Nyungar* (or *Noongah*) and many other such similar names used for languages in various parts of Australia.

The word '*Kaurna'* does not appear in any of the fifteen or so vocabulary lists or other primary sources of language collected from the Adelaide Plains, except for the single appearance of *Kaurna* as the name of Encounter Bay Bob's tribe in William Wyatt's "'SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MANNERS AND SUPERSTITIONS OF THE ADELAIDE AND ENCOUNTER BAY ABORIGINAL TRIBES WITH A VOCABULARY OF THEIR LANGUAGES, NAMES OF PERSONS AND PLACES ETC." (1879).

The earliest documents refer to the people of the Adelaide Plains in various ways, but most often simply as "the Adelaide Tribe".

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Joseph Paul Gaimard (1796–1858)
(naturalist aboard the French ship, the Astrolabe on a voyage of scientific discovery)

Gaimard (1826) collected a wordlist from Harry and Sally of Cape Jervis whilst in King George Sound, near Albany, southwest W.A. He titled his wordlist: "VOCABULAIRE DE LA **LANGUE DES HABITANS DU GOLFE SAINT VINCENT**". Gaimard's is the earliest known wordlist of the Adelaide language (Miyurna), collected 10 years before colonisation.

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❑ **George Augustus Robinson (1791-1866) and/or his son Charles**
   (superintendant of Flinders Is. Settlement, Tasmania)

Robinson (1837) makes no identification whatsoever on the pages of his (Adelaide Plains) wordlist. He identified the source, Kalloongoo, as coming from Yankalilla-Rapid Bay area.

❑ **Hermann Koeler**
   (ship's doctor who visited SA from late 1837 until early 1838)

Koeler (1842) (collected in 1837) "**Sprache der Süd-Australier am St Vincent-Golf**". Also refers to the "Adelaide tribe"

❑ **John Stephens** (1806-1850)
   (writer, editor a wrote *Land of Promise* to attract would-be colonists to SA and newspaper owner in the early South Australia)

Stephens (1839) "**Adelaide Tribes**"

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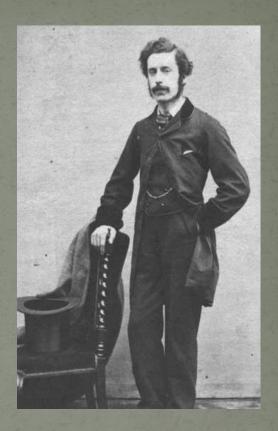
❑ **Capt. George Grey (1812-1898)**
 (explorer in WA, later to become SA's 3rd Governor 1841-1845)
 was drawing comparisons between languages in
Western Australia and New South Wales.
In this publication he refers to the language of the
Adelaide Plains as   "**South Australia**" (1840)
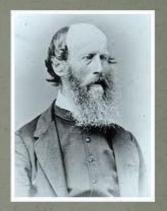
❑ **William Williams**

 (Colonial Storekeeper, arrived at Holdfast Bay, 13 Nov. 1836)
"The Language of the **Natives of South Australia**"
(1840)

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□ **Chistian Gottlob Teichelmann (1807-1888)**
□ **Clamor Wilhelm Schürmann (1815-1893)**
  (German missionaries from Dresden, arrived in SA in October, 1838)
In their dictionary (1840) they use *Pangka meyunna* to refer to 'the natives on the banks of the lake' and *Pangka* 'Lake Alexandrina'.
Schürmann in his journal in early 1839 refers to Marimeyunna (east men, probably Peramangk) (Schurmann, 1987: 40), Wirramu Meyu at Encounter Bay (Ramindjeri) (Schurmann, 1987: 45), Wonkameyunna (west men) who fought with the Marimeyunna (Schurmann, 1987: 53), Parakameyunna <sic> [should be Parnkameyunna] from Lake Alexandrina (ie Ngarrindjeri).

Their dictionary (1840) : "The **Aboriginal Language of South Australia** spoken by the natives in and for some distance around Adelaide".

(Photos from later years – they were 31 and 23, when they arrived in Adelaide)

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❑ **Samuel Gottlieb Klose (1802-1882)**

   (German missionary from Dresden, arrived in SA in August 1840 and took over
   the running of the school at Piltawodli from Schürmann)
was the first to document terms used by Aboriginal people for
local groups on the Adelaide Plains. **Miyurna** 'people' occurs in
both terms *Taralye meyunna* and *Wito meyunna* that he records
(letter to Dresden, 3 Sept. 1844) .

In a letter to Dresden, 3 Sept. 1844 he writes: "our Adelaide natives are
called **Taralye Meyunna** ['stockade men'] by the other tribes. … Formerly
they were called **Wito Meyunna** = reed men" (in Graetz, 2002: 35).

[Note that the Fulham area ('The Reedbeds') was known as Witungga 'reed place' (T&S, 1840:
76).]

❑ **Christian Teichelmann**

   (see above)
In his addition to the 1840 dictionary with Schürmann: "Dictionary of the
Adelaide Dialect" (1857)

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❑ **W.A. Cawthorne (1825-1897)**

  (arrived in Adelaide, Age 17, in May 1841. Took an interest in artefacts)
Cawthorne (1844: 2): "**the Adelaide tribe**"
Cawthorne (1865): "**the Adelaide Tribe**"

❑ **William Wyatt (1804-1886)**
(arrived in SA 14 Feb 1837. Protector of Aborigines 1837-1839)
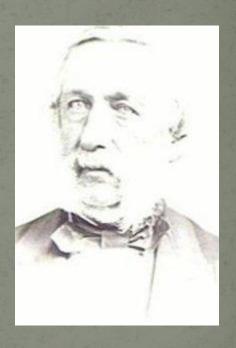Wyatt (1979): The **Adelaide Tribe**
(and Encounter Bay Tribe and Rapid Bay)
Following his wordlist:

• **Meeyúrna** 'Onkaparinga Jack's Tribe';

• **Kaurna** 'Encounter Bay Bob's Tribe'.
Wyatt also recorded in his general vocabulary list kōrne
'a man' which he identifies as an Encounter Bay word
(ie Ramindjeri), as well as mayoo 'man', mayoola (dual)
and mayoona (plural).
He also wrongly lists mayo kōmbo 'the outer or man
rainbow' as an Encounter Bay word.
He seems not to connect these words in his general vocabulary with his
names of tribes above.

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❑ **John Wrathall Bull (1804-1886)**

(arrived in SA in May 1838. As an old man he wrote his memoirs)

In "Early Experiences of Life in South Australia"he referred to the "**Cowandilla Tribe**" (Bull 1884: 67)

❑ **Edward Micklethwaite Curr**

(settler in Northern Victoria; collector of Aboriginal vocabularies)

In "The Australian Race" he uses '**Adelaide Tribe**' drawing on T&S (1840) and Wyatt (1879) (Curr 1886)

❑ **Edward Stephens**

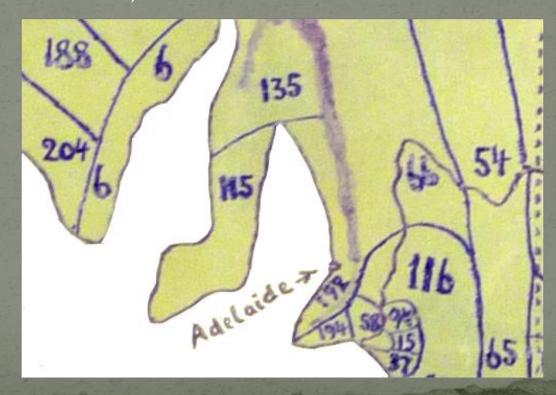(arrived in the colony of SA as a lad with his parents in the late 1830s)

In 1889 he refers to the "**Tribes which once inhabited the Adelaide Plains**"
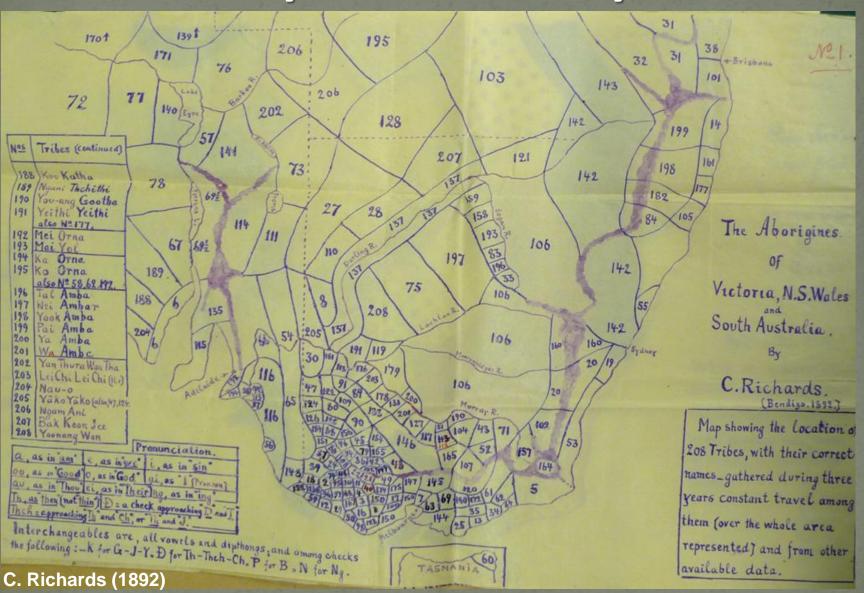
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❑ **C. Richards**

(dentist from Bendigo)

Richards (1892) drew a language map of SE Australia where he identifies **Mei Orna** (Adelaide Plains) vs **Ka Orna** (Encounter Bay, Port Elliot, Goolwa etc). The spellings used by Richards are quite independent (not seen in the work of others) but clearly refer to **Miyurna** (Adelaide Plains) and **Kornar** (Fleurieu Peninsula)

6	**Parn** Kalla
15	**Won Ya** Kul
37	**Pan Garath** Pul Or
54	Koro **Walli**
58	Thor **Or Orn**
65	**Meir** Kanni
66	**Wa** Kanoo **Won**
94	Koro **Walli**
115	**Nar Onga**
135	Warra
188	Koo **Katha**
192	**Mei** Orna
194	Ka **Orna**
204	Nauo

C. Richards (1892)

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❑ **R.H. Matthews**

The Adelaide Plains people together with the Yorke Peninsula people comprised the **Adjahdurah nation** (1900)
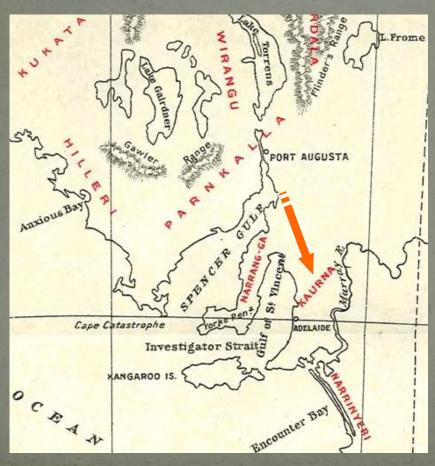
❑ **Thomas Day**

   (grew up as a child in the early days of the colony of South Australia).
Title of a brief handwritten manuscript '**Memoirs of the Extinct tribe of Cowandilla**' (1902).
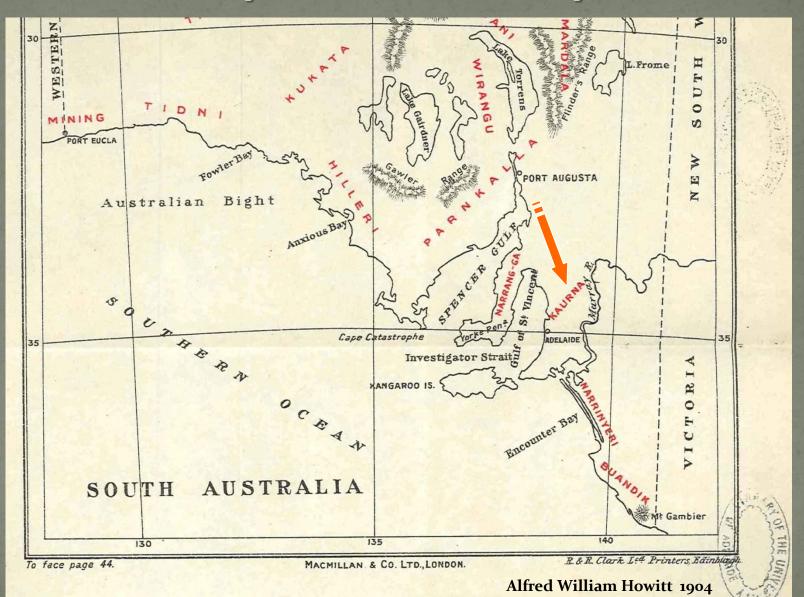
❑ **J. Chittleborough**

(was a boy when he arrived with his family aboard the Buffalo in 1836)
In his article) "Primitive Adelaide" in The Register, 27/28 December 1906 which includes a short Kaurna wordlist, he names "**the Adelaide tribe of natives**"

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☐ **Alfred William Howitt**
(anthropologist, explorer and naturalist; Royal Society of Victoria)
In his book "*The Native Tribes of Southeastern Australia*" Howitt (1904)
produced a map with **Kaurna** marked on the Adelaide Plains region.

In his book *The Native Tribes of Southeastern Australia* Howitt (1904) produced a map with **Kaurna** marked on the Adelaide Plains region. The word **Kaurna** runs from the northeast of Adelaide in a north easterly direction to the River Murray (across Ngadjuri country). This was clearly the source of Kaurna in Strehlow's (1910) map (following).

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Alfred William Howitt 1904

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In his book (1904: 749), Howitt makes only one reference to Kaurna, citing Dr E.M. McKinley as his source :

> "In hard summers the new-born children were all eaten by the **Kaura** <sic> tribe in the neighbourhood of Adelaide; this might be inferred from the remarkable gaps that appear in the ages of the children."

[RA: the gaps in ages of the children may result from birth control practices].

Howitt's sources include Kühn (Narrang-ga), T.M. Sutton (Narrang-ga), F.W. Taplin (Narrinyeri) and Rev. George Taplin (Narrinyeri).

He mentions the difficulty in obtaining correct language names and mapping territorial boundaries which are "necessarily approximate" (Howitt, 1904: xii). Howitt also locates Wirangu between Lake Torrens and Lake Gardiner, much further east and north than it should be and on the wrong side of Kukata.

[RA: the placement of the word Kaurna may have more to do with a white space upon which to write it than any precise location].

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❑ **Carl Strehlow (1871-1922)**
(Lutheran Missionary at Lake Kilalpaninna and Hermannsburg; Arrernte-focussed)
Strehlow (1910) published a map "Wohngebiete der Eingeborenenstämme in Zentral-Australien" showing **Kaurna** in Ngadjuri country (to the northeast of Adelaide). This section of his map draws directly from Howitt (1904).

WOHNGEBIETE
DER
EINGEBORENENSTAEMME
IN
Süd- und Zentral-Australien

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❑ **Daisy Bates (1914-1999)**
(welfare worker and anthropologist)
Bates (1919) collected a short wordlist from Ivaritji at Point Pearce in 1919. She identified her source as "Iberita (Amelia), the last of the **Adelaide district tribe**" (see below)
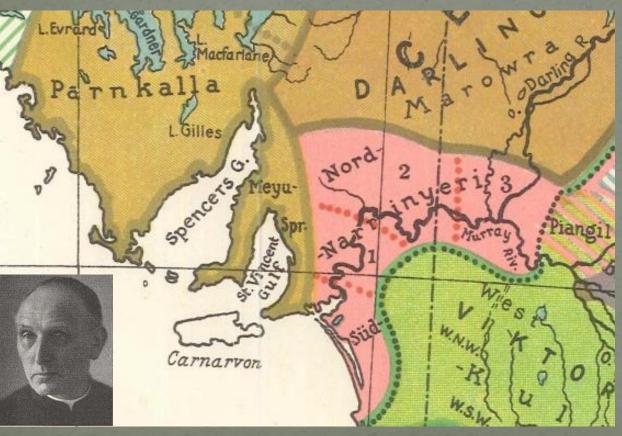
❑ **John McConnell Black**
(South Australian Museum)
Black (1920) collected a short vocabulary from Ivaritji which he calls "The **Adelaide Language**" (but in the same paper has Narungga, Kukata and Narrinyeri vocabularies) (see Ivaritji below). Black only refers to the Adelaide Language and Adelaide Tribe, but he does include the word miju (or meju) 'man' and also cites T&S's (1840) spelling meyu '

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Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954)
(Austrian priest, anthropologist & linguist)
Produced the first complete language map of Australia (Schmidt, 1926) and identifies the language spoken on the Adelaide Plains as **Meyu Spr** (*Sprache* = **language**).

Schmidt cites Howitt (1904), Black (1920) and Taplin amongst his sources. Black uses the spellings miju and meju, though he also cites T&S spelling meyu. So presumably T&S via Black (1920) is the source of Schmidt's **Meyu**. In a number of other places Schmidt uses the local word for 'man; Aboriginal person' to identify languages and groups on his map.

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❑ **Norman B Tindale (1900-1933)**
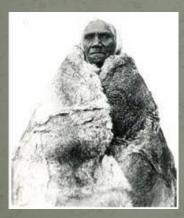(Ethnologist, South Australian Museum)
At a meeting of the Anthropological Society of South Australia
in 1926, Tindale suggested that '**Kaurna**' was the correct term for
the Adelaide Tribe (see Gara, 1990: 132). However, Tindale
himself did not begin to use the term 'Kaurna' in his
publications until 1936 (see below).

❑ **Ivaritji (died 1929)**
(Amelia Taylor, Amelia Savage)
identified by Gara (1990) as Ityamaii, daughter of Ityamaiitpinna (King Rodney),
who attended the school at Piltawodli run by the Dresden missionaries); so-
called 'last of the Adelaide Tribe'.

Ivaritji (1927) **Dundagunya** tribe (*Advertiser)* "His [King
Rodney's] father and grandfather before him were kings of the
same tribe, which was called **Dundagunya**" (Gara, 1990: 90)
Also in a conversation with Mr Beaver, Adelaide City Council
Town Clerk, she referred to her father as "the last king of the
Adelaide tribe" (Gara, 1990: 97). Despite Tindale's claim (see
below) that she approved of the name Kaurna, she does not
appear to use the word herself.

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❑ **Walter Howchin**
(Archaeologist)
Howchin (1934) "the **Adelaide Tribe** of Aborigines now extinct"

❑ **Noel Augustin Webb**
(retired magistrate)
Webb (1936-7) wrote an article about placenames on the Adelaide Plains. He identifies the people as "the **Adelaide Tribe**"

❑ **Edwards, Robert**
(Curator of Anthropology, South Australian Museum)
Publication titled *The **Kaurna** People of the Adelaide Plains* (Edwards, 1972) draws heavily on Tindale and features Angas painting of Kadlitpinna on the cover. Rear cover features another Angas painting of an Aboriginal hut on the Coorong "of a type used by the Kaurna people".

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❑ **Norman B. Tindale**
(Ethnologist, South Australian Museum)

Tindale (1974: 133):
    "The aboriginal tribe that formerly occupied the area that is now the city of Adelaide was the **Kaurna**. Their territory extended from the Redhill district south to Cape Jervis on the eastern shore of the Gulf St Vincent. The word ['war:a] in their language, and in the language of some adjoining tribes, meant "speech", hence they spoke ['**Kaurna'war:a**]. By a play on language this name became in the Ramindjeri language of Encounter Bay ['**Kunawar:a**], a derogatory term for their feared and hated northern neighbours, since ['kuna] has the meaning of "dung"….."

Tindale also says:
"In 1931 the term **Kaurna** was checked and approved by Ivaritji (Ibaritji) the last fullblood survivor of the tribe."
[RA: Note that Ivaritji died on Christmas Day in 1929 – see Gara, 1990: 64, 98]

And further "W.A. Cawthorne (1844) spoke of Kaurna hordes on the plains near Adelaide ….." [RA: Cawthorne never used the term 'Kaurna']

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❑ **Norman B. Tindale**
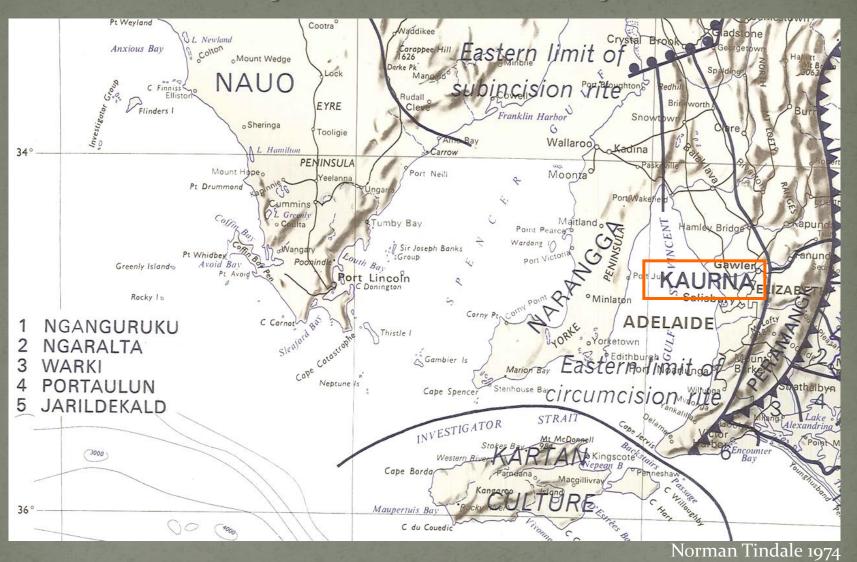(Ethnologist, South Australian Museum)

Tindale (1974: 213) lists many alternative names, and alternative spellings of these names for the people of the Adelaide Plains:

> Alt.: Kaura (misprint for Kaurna), Coorna, Koornawarra, Nantuwara ("Kangaroo speakers," name given to northern hordes), Nantuwaru, Nganawara, Meljurna ("quarrelsome men," said of northern hordes of Kaurna), Kurumidlanta (Pangkala term, lit. "evil spirits", Milipitingara (MS), Midlanta (another name given by Pangkala), Widninga (Ngadjuri term applied to Kaurna or Port Wakefield and Buckland Park), Winaini (horde north of Gawler), Winnaiynie, Meyu (['meju] = man), Wakanuwan (name applied by Jarildekald to this and other tribes, including Ngaiawang), "Adelaide tribe," Warra (means "speech" a name for language), Warrah, Karnuwarra ("hills language," a northern dialect, presumably that of Port Wakefield), Jaitjawar:a ("our own language"), Padnaindi (horde name), Padnayndie, Medaindi (horde living near Glenelg), Medaindie, Merildekald (Tanganekald term also loosely given to Peramangk), Merelde (Ramindjeri term applied most frequently to the Peramangk but also to the Kaurna).

References:

> J. Stephens, 1839; Williams, 1839; Teichelmann, 1840 <sic 1841>; Teichelmann and Schürmann, 1840; Gell, 1842; South Australian Register, 1842; Cawthorne, 1844 MS, 1926; Moorhouse, 1844; Schürmann, 1844; Eyre, 1845; Behr, 1848; Wyatt, 1879; Mueller, 1882; E. Stephens, 1889; East, 1889; McKinlay in Howitt, 1904; Howitt, 1904; Howchin and Gregory, 1909; Strehlow, 1910; Parkhouse, 1936 <sic 1923>; Tindale, 1931 MS, 1936, 1940; Tindale and Mountford, 1936; Berndt, 1940; Tindale and Lindsay, 1963.
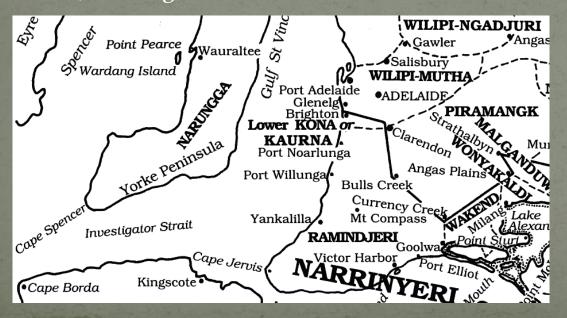
Note that Howitt (1904) and Strehlow (1910) are amongst Tindale's sources. Perhaps Tindale acquired his use of Kaurna from them and tried to justify it with his reference to Ivaritji.

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Norman Tindale 1974

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❑ **Catherine and Ronald Berndt**
(Anthropologists who worked mainly with Ngarrindjeri informants)
Berndt & Berndt (1993) identify the language group for Adelaide proper as "**Wilipi-Mutha**". A small wedge of country from Brighton down the coast to a little way south of Brighton and inland to Clarendon is labelled "**Lower Kona or Kaurna**". "**Wirdninya**" is used for country north of Salisbury, bounded by Hamley Bridge, Balaklava and almost to Crystal Brook. Berndt & Berndt (1993: 303) also say "**Lower Kaurna (walpara** branch) also **Kona**, **Korna** and **Nganawara**. Wyatt wrote of an Aboriginal named Encounter Bay Bob, Parroo Paicha, as being a Kaurna man.

The term usually referred to the Adelaide tribe. All the evidence we obtained suggested close association of **Lower Kaurna** with the main body of Kukabrak [ie Ngarrindjeri]" [RA: On their map the Berndts identify Kaurna as a dialtect of Ngarrindjeri, but linguistically the language of the Adelaide Plains is vastly different to Ngarrindjeri. It is more closely related to Nyungar in Perth than it is to Ngarrindjeri]

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Language Names and Group Names
Drawn from Other Languages

It is not unusual for a language name or the name of a people to be drawn from a neighbouring language, or for outsiders to use a different name to the one used by insiders to refer to themselves. *Luritja*, a Western Desert language like Pitjantjatjara, draws its name from Arrernte where Luritja means 'stranger'. Similarly, *Antikirinya*, also a Western Desert Language, draws its name from Arrernte where it means 'southerner'. Indeed, Antikirinya country is located to the immediate south of Arrernte territory. *Navajo* is likely to originate from the Tewa word nava-hu 'cultivated field + mouth of canyon'.
The Navajo were identified to the Spaniards by the Tewa (a Peublo people) as 'those who cultivated the canyons' (http://www.navajocentral.org/faq02a.htm).
Hungarians call their country Magyar. English speakers call it Hungary.
There are numerous examples elsewhere around the world.

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Summary I

❑ **Wyatt (1879)** was the first to publish the name *Kaurna* (with the current spelling) where he correctly identified it as "Encounter Bay Bob's Tribe". He did not use it to refer to the people of the Adelaide Plains.

Kaurna was listed by Wyatt alongside *Meeyuna* "Onkaparinga Jack's Tribe". Onkaparinga Jack was Mullawirraburka or 'King John', one of T&S's key informants (see T&S, 1840: 72-73). As noted above, none of the wordlists collected from the people of the Adelaide Plains people include the word "*Kaurna*", though many do list *miyurna* and almost all include *miyu* (with various spellings). Indeed, even Wyatt does *not* include '*Kaurna*' within his wordlist proper either.

❑ The language map produced by **Richards (1892)** provides totally independent spellings for these two language names and locates *Mei Orna* (*Miyurna*) on the Adelaide Plains and *Ka Orna* (*Kaurna*) on the southern Fleurieu Peninsula (Encounter Bay, Pt Elliot, Goolwa), thus providing strong corroborating evidence.

❑ We suspect that Tindale's use of the name Kaurna for the Adelaide Plains people may go back to **Howitt (1904)** and his very loose placement of the word in a blank space on the map. None of Howitt's acknowledged sources ever worked on the Adelaide Plains. He drew on Narungga and Ngarrindjeri sources.

Cont'd

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Summary II

❑ **Steve Hemming (1990)** wrote a paper titled ''Kaurna' Identity: A Brief History' in which he tried to trace the origins of the use of the term 'Kaurna' and observes that, notwithstanding its placement on the Howitt (1904) map, the term did not gain currency until after the publication of Tindale's (1974) *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*. Although Tindale had proposed the use of the term earlier in 1926, he did not begin to use 'Kaurna' in his own publications until 1936.

❑ As a result of **our linguistic research** a number of important sources unknown to Hemming in 1990 have emerged. Some of these, notably Klose (see Graetz, 2002) and Richards (1892) have a strong bearing on the naming issue.