



We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of ancestral Lands across Australia.
Respecting Elders past and present and local Aboriginal Custodians.

Building Strong Foundations

From the Development Desk

Knowledge about the Foundation is growing and Koorie families are increasingly seeking our support. We expected a rise in numbers this year, but have been surprised by the many new families.

Our current situation bears out the recent AAP news report that there has been 'a massive increase in the numbers of students attending non-government schools over the past decade'. There has been a 22% increase nationally from 1998 to 2008 and a 100% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Victorian Catholic system over the past decade; *'It's different at this school. My boy's really happy — he wants to go to school'* (recent feedback).

In addition to the Koorie students from Victoria, we are also supporting Aboriginal students from remote communities who are studying in Victorian schools. The fact that so many more Aboriginal parents and families are making tough educational decisions, which incur a heavy financial burden, is a wonderful sign of hope and confidence.

Many of the families that we support write to tell us how important the Foundation is to them in being able to sustain the costs of keeping their children at school:

'...each year you have made things a lot easier for us as a family. I don't think we could have managed otherwise...they are doing great';

'I hear you help Koorie families; I want to keep my children at their school, it's a really good school, but I just don't have the money for everything'.

These families are strengthened by seeing the progress that their children are making, developing in these students greater self esteem and higher aspirations.

Our Wonderful Benefactors

We are blessed with ongoing generous support from Harry Bugden and partnerships and support from St Vincent De Paul, Portland House, Telstra Foundation, Merrin Foundation, the Victorian Catholic Bishops, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Blessed Sacrament Fathers, the Redemptorists' Congregation, Cabrini Health, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, St Kevin's Parish Lower Templestowe and many more generous Parishes, schools and wonderful individuals for which we are thankful.

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Many Musical Maestros

Another pleasing aspect of this year's applications, has been the increase in requests for music tuition support.

The range of musical interests is broad and the creative juices are certainly flowing.

John Arthur — Chair of Trustees

Opening The Doors Foundation helps the children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with the opportunity to seek an alternative education to the mainstream State system. This system has been undergoing change but the transition program has been slow and it has been questioned whether the shift will really make a difference in the education of Koorie kids. Koorie kids in the Independent school system are easily identifiable and so their needs can be addressed. The understanding of the students background is important in providing help, particularly as the students reach year 11 and 12 and are looking for guidance with their post secondary school careers. The Foundation has recognized this need and is developing relationships with organisations in the Services, Trades and Finance industry to provide increased employment and further educational opportunities for the students. The Foundation, this year, will assist a record number of students at a cost of around \$200,000. This is a real success story but the continued support and generosity of our friends is essential.

END OF FINANCIAL YEAR Yes, it is that time of year again!!!

I am enclosing a donation slip with this Newsletter just in case you would like to take the opportunity to make a donation for the 2008/9 tax year! **Donations to the Foundation are critical to our work .**

Donate Online – Donations can now be made to the Foundation by visiting our website www.openingthedoors.org.au and following the Donate Online link. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

THANK YOU!!!

Opening the Doors Foundation staff and friends send our best wishes to all those affected by the terrible bushfires. We pray that you all find the strength to be able to move forward, supported as we are, by the love and generosity of your fellow Australians.

Applications for 2009 have now Closed Application Forms for 2010 will be available October 2009

Seeing Real Progress

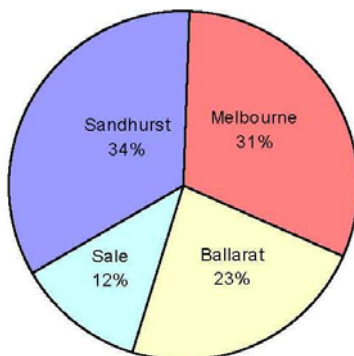
The 'at risk' students that we support have been achieving at an unprecedented rate. They have held their first formal Awards dinner 'True Colours', a truly inspirational evening at which they showed the DVD that they had produced of their song and the process of writing and recording it. Many of these students have overcome huge obstacles, to develop into such happy and confident adults and show their 'True Colours'. Overheard on the night *"Well they can't call me a loser, I won an award!"*

The outstanding staff and volunteers are part of something very special. One of the volunteers said it all when she said *"I can't imagine any one NOT wanting to volunteer to be part of this"*. We are really proud, on your behalf, to be part of the support available for these fine young people.

How Your Donation Makes a Difference

To date we have supported over 400 students in more than 100 Primary and Secondary Independent Schools with around \$200,000. The bulk of our support buys Uniforms 43%, Books 21% and pays levies 10% (incl. VET/VCAL). It also promotes health and safety with camps 15%, swimming and gym classes 3%.

Regional Distribution 2009



TRUE COLOURS



Students Supporting Students

We thank the following colleges for their recent support: Avila, Mt Waverley; Loreto Mandeville Hall, Toorak; Genazzano, Kew; Padua, Rosebud; Sacred Heart, Newtown; Aquinas, Ringwood & Loreto College, Ballarat.

Appreciation Gathering

We warmly invite all of our generous donors to a night of heartfelt thanks. Our Appreciation Gathering will be held on Thursday 6 August from 6 to 8pm at the Treacy Conference Centre, Parkville. RSVP by phone on 03 9443 9070 or email: openingthedoors@optusnet.com.au

FIRE Carrier

On 29 May Genazzano FCJ College will host a breakfast on behalf of the Foundation bringing together 250 students, teachers and parents for the launch of a new exciting 'FIRE Carrier' schools initiative. The FIRE Carrier will be a nominated student in participating schools who will undertake the duty of carrying the FIRE message - Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education which aims to keep the reconciliation fire burning throughout schools and the community. Any schools wanting to be part of the FIRE Carrier Project and receive assistance to develop a Reconciliation Plan, please contact Felicity at the OTDF office.

A River Dreaming on Display

Artwork from Elder Elizabeth Pike's book 'A River Dreaming' was recently the centre of an exhibition in Bendigo. Aunty Betty wrote A River Dreaming which she says is closely linked to her own personal story of dislocation from culture and loss of identity, the story is told through Duck and Platypus and is beautifully illustrated by Yvette Koreny. Elizabeth supports the Foundation by donating all proceeds of book sales to the Foundation, for which we are very grateful. A great school resource, A River Dreaming is \$19.95 and can be ordered through Binnap Partners by phoning 03 9480 3849, discount available for class sets.