

JUNE 2024 NEWSLETTER

IMPACT



OPENING THE DOORS FOUNDATION
Keeping Koorie Kids in an Education of their Choice



Palm Island Cultural Trip



Vicki Clark OAM

As you read of the wonderful impact you have helped to make, it is quite fitting that it is also National Reconciliation Week with the theme this year being – Now More Than Ever. A reminder to all of us that the rights of First Nations people will, and must continue. Thank you for all you have done to help OTDF invest in First Nations lives, ensuring their right to equality in education and a better future.

This year OTDF has received an unprecedented number of grant applications. Overall, in Victoria in 2024 we have funded 1085 student grants. The increased demand for support is due to the cost-of-living crisis placing extra demands on family budgets and a growing awareness of OTDF's role in helping First Nations families self-determine their education. Due to the extra 268 student grants, OTDF incurred a financial deficit. The current intention is to 'keep the doors open' to all applications in 2025, however this could result in a large deficit if new funding is not achieved. Unfortunately, this would mean 'closing some doors' of the student grant program for the first time since OTDF was established 24 years ago. It is imperative we continue to be able to support students for the duration of their education journey and ensure they are supported until the completion of their schooling. We want to be able to continue to do so, however OTDF are now in a very difficult financial situation and need your support.

Our success would not be possible without you. Together, we have created a network of change-makers who are shaping a brighter future for First Nations children. Thank you for considering this request and your ongoing support, your dedication to our mission and your belief in the power of education to change lives.

Message from the Chair and Co-founder

Artwork-Vicki Clark OAM

The office of Opening The Doors Foundation is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung People of the Kulin Nations. Opening The Doors Foundation acknowledges the traditional Owners of ancestral lands across Australia. We respect Elders past and present and local Aboriginal Custodians.

Together We Walk

2nd of August
2024

Come together to
signify National
Aboriginal Children's
Day and support
educational
opportunities for First
Nations children

Register your 2024 event now

<https://opening-the-doors-foundation-together-we-walk-2024.raisely.com/>



Artwork-Vicki Clark OAM



Opening The Doors Foundation
Keeping Koorie Kids in an
Education of their Choice

Walk or organise an
event of your choice
to raise funds for
First Nations
students



Together We Walk! 2nd August Schools - Walk-a-thon and fundraising events 2024

In the lead up to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (4th of August), the Opening The Doors Foundation is encouraging schools to get involved in the days before and after, for our 3rd annual schools walk-a-thon. In 2023 schools raised over \$6,500 for OTDF. We hope more schools will join us in 2024!

Schools will come together across Victoria on the 2nd of August to walk laps around their ovals and raise funds to support First Nations students access equality in education. Schools can choose to host other fundraising events to raise funds. Please join us and help First Nations students!

For more details and to register -

<https://openingthedoorstogetherwewalk.raisely.com/>

or email firecarriers@openingthedoors.org.au.

FIRE Carriers in the Making

Bunurong Schools Commissioning Day

There are eight schools that are part of the Bunurong Schools area and on the 24th of April, a Bunurong Schools Commissioning Day was held. Students and staff from Padua College came together at John Paul College Frankston for their Commissioning Ceremony. The day started with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony by the Bunurong Elders, followed by the Commissioning Ceremony. The different schools bought their altar cloths to place on the shared altar. Over a hundred students were part of the morning and the new FIRE Carrier students and staff were commissioned to become future FIRE Carriers. Become a FIRE Carrier school today -

<https://www.openingthedoors.org.au/fire-carrier-program>



Bunurong Schools Commissioning Day

Schools Raising Funds

Genazzano FCJ College Trivia Night

Genazzano FCJ College has long been a supporter of the FIRE Carrier Program and the Opening the Doors Foundation. In April, the FIRE Carrier students held a Trivia Night to fundraise for OTDF. The students worked hard and produced a set of Quiz Questions that focused on the contributions that First Nations Peoples have made to Australia through music, sport and history. There was plenty of competition between tables and lots of laughs and fun had by the participants.

Thank you to the wonderful efforts of these students, the teachers and school leadership support, and to all those who attended the evening and contributed to another successful fundraising event.



Bunurong Schools altar cloths

Finding His Calling

Kale has had his challenges over the years. Despite the challenges, his mum has shared that he has found his calling playing tennis. He has represented the State in the Indigenous squads and was in the National Evonne Goolagong Squad. Kale is now training for the Autism Pathways program for Autism and won the State Special Olympics division last year.



National Evonne Goolagong Squad

Originally from WA, Kale was selected to be the first Indigenous act to open the WA Orchestra performance. He sang in full language.

Well done Kale – a student with many talents! OTDF are proud to support your education journey and wish you the very best.



Kale

Immersion in Cultural Opportunities

Cooper attended the Palm Island cultural trip and said it was something he will remember for life. He thought it was such a great opportunity to immerse himself and learn about his culture. He said he learnt so much from the kids, elders and community. Learning to dance and play the didgeridoo were his highlights. He felt a little envious of the simple life they all have away from technology and the benefits that brings. He thought the kids were amazing, athletic, funny and loving. It highlighted to him the importance of family and friends, culture and respect. He would have loved to stay longer and was sad to leave after just 5 days. He hopes to return to the Island once he graduates. All this would not have been possible without the assistance from OTDF. He is forever grateful for the trip and all that the foundation has done for him and his siblings.

Cooper - Palm Island Cultural Trip



Students Supporting the Foundation



Lara

Lara attends Iona College and raised funds for OTDF by establishing a shop which sold preloved clothing to staff. The idea emerged from a Numeracy project where value could be seen in real world experience of creating a small business, designing a logo and posters, marketing her stall, finding stock to sell and managing the money related to sales. Lara devoted many lunchtimes to this shop, and staff enjoyed the opportunity to on-sell clothing knowing that they were acting with sustainability in mind, as well as feeling pleased that the small profit made would help to educate First Nations students through OTDF. Thank you Lara for your wonderful effort!

Stories of Impact - 2023

Opportunities

"The grant helps allow us to financially send Alexia to this school, which has been amazing in giving her the opportunities and teaching expertise she has received. The school is smaller and therefore teachers and staff know all the students and their needs. This makes sending Alexia to school each day easy for us as parents as we know she is given a respectful and safe educational environment. **These grants are fabulous for being able to send our kids to the best schools and have better opportunities than we would be able to give them otherwise.**

Grandparents Bringing up Children

"We are grandparents bringing up our grandchildren. Bella has had to face many adversities in her life and it has not been easy as older people providing the necessary support for our grandchildren. It has been heartwarming to see her successes over the past year. We very much value the support of the Foundation. This has **helped set her up for success**. She has blossomed this year."

Bright Future Ahead

"In 2023 Helen has made steady progress in the academic space. She struggles with anxiety and at times this can impact the ability to concentrate and learn. However with the support of an amazing school staff she has performed well in all subjects in 2023 - a big improvement from 2022. The next two years are critical as we prepare for the transition to high school. I have seen greater confidence with core subjects including maths and science. English is a work in progress but progress has been made with spelling and writing. I have also seen greater enjoyment and confidence with learning which is a good sign for the years ahead.

"The grant enables us to send Helen to a small Catholic school that provides genuine care and support for children who have challenges. **In a larger public school I believe Helen would struggle and be overwhelmed. The individual support has been exceptional and will never be forgotten.** In addition, the school seeks our input on what they can do to increase awareness and understanding of our culture."

Starting Right

"Sierra started her year as a very anxious and emotional little girl. Her confidence gradually grew stronger and she felt a strong sense of acceptance. I believe this had a lot to do with the supports in place at her school, but also because she always **has a nice new uniform and good quality shoes. This helped her to fit in well with her social groups** and not feel different to others. Thank you OTDF!"



Five Children Flourishing

"I am saddened to think this will be our last formal contact. **It has been a long journey and wouldn't have happened without the support of you all at OTDF.** You all feel like family and my 5 children will be forever grateful for the opportunities that each had with the help of OTDF. Three of the five kids have gone onto university. One is a Physiotherapist, one is an Events Manager (completed 3 years at uni) and one is currently still studying Engineering in Melbourne. One is working on a Sheep Station and Cliff is still at school (Year 12 in 2024). **The kids have not forgotten what you have all done and will also show their support - so that OTDF can continue to support our mob with education.** Thanks for all your support over the years. Nothing was ever too much trouble for you."

Please consider donating and investing in First Nations children today

Get in Touch

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Hours: Wednesday to Friday

9am to 5pm