



OPENING THE DOORS FOUNDATION

Keeping Koorie Kids in an education of their choice

ACTIVITY REPORT | 2022

BUSINESS AS USUAL

What a year! Students have been back on school grounds full-time and we have been able to support 994 students in making this transition. When my fellow founders of the Foundation and I opened the 'doors' over 20 years ago, I did not imagine that we would be able to support so many Aboriginal families to make the choices they want for their children's education.

Once again, the other Trustees and I have been very pleased to hear about the experiences of our students who attend schools throughout Victoria. Being able to give them the opportunity to take part in their school activities and dream big, while we follow their different journeys throughout their school life, brings us so much joy.

With the huge growth in student numbers, the Foundation is facing the challenge of sustaining our support for families. For 2023, the Foundation will continue to support all applications which meet the OTDF's criteria. To continue to do this into the future, the Foundation will seek to increase donations from our dedicated supporters and hope also to develop new funding sources. In 2022, families of our students and former students have helped to secure some very fruitful fundraising opportunities, including through the musical, Hamilton, in Melbourne, Glamarama and Bloomberg Philanthropy. This is wonderful to see and I want to acknowledge that students and former students, who have received support from the Foundation, have often 'given back' in this way throughout our history. I also want to thank those schools and other donors who have fundraised and donated to the Foundation this year. These funds are vital in helping us to keep our 'doors' open for the next generation.

I am excited to share with you in this Activity Report all the activities that the Foundation has undertaken this year. I also hope that you enjoy reading about the impact the Foundation has had and hearing about some of our families.

Vicki Clark OAM

On behalf of the Trustees of
Opening the Doors Foundation

STORIES FROM OUR FAMILIES

"Lily was nominated as the school House Spirit leader at the recent inter-school swimming sports. Lily represents her school at all extra-curricular sporting events such as Auskick, Hot Shot Tennis and interschool swimming and athletics. Lily demonstrates a strong tendency to leadership. This could be as a school representative or community representative. Her academic growth is continuing and is in line with the expectations of the Victorian Curriculum. She is projected to complete her primary education at expected standard. Lily is also very inclusive of others regardless of age or ability. She is a proud Indigenous woman with a keen interest in her cultural heritage."

"Dakora made a beautiful poster of the Arctic Fox. Dakora also read many books at home/remote learning that were in Aboriginal language and the teachers wanted to share the recordings she made of this with other classes. We truly are grateful for your continued support. Thank you!"

"Mason has played Cricket, Football and Tennis for the first time this year. Having the funding from the Foundation allows Mason's parents to allocate some of the carer payment to support Mason in his sporting commitments. Mason also represented his school at a regional level in cross country and was the first to cross the line in the annual school fun run. The OTDF program is amazing and helps our Kinship Carers out so much. It also allows our young people to fit in at school, having all they need to complete the school year along with their peers."

"Lincoln had a big growth spurt and required an entirely new uniform and shoes which the grant paid for. The grant is a saver for my family, it means we can send Lincoln to the school of his choice and a school where he gets the best opportunities to learn and succeed."

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.

This material may contain images of members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities who have entered the Dreaming. They are used with the greatest respect and appreciation.



FUNDRAISING WITH SCHOOLS

Fundraising by schools had decreased over the past couple of years as schools have needed to focus all their energy on students' learning, following the pandemic. In 2022 schools are getting back on board with fundraising in a range of creative ways. The dedication and drive of school staff, students and wider school communities are inspiring – it sees them giving to assist Indigenous students to attend the school of their choice with all the necessities required and achieving equal opportunity.

Below are some of the fundraising activities which have taken place in schools this year.

WALKATHON

OTDF held a virtual schools' walk-a-thon during NAIDOC Week – students fund-raised in their school community by completing as many laps as possible around their oval. The Foundation would like to thank all the students and staff who hosted this event and helped raise funds for First Nations students supported by the Foundation. OTDF Foundation Trustees and staff promoted this fundraising campaign and also took part in the walk-a-thon. In total schools raised over \$2,000 for our students.

The Foundation will be running this school fundraising campaign again in 2023.



*Catholic Regional College
Melton – Walk-a-thon
as part of their NAIDOC
Week activities.*

NAIDOC WEEK EVENT

In NAIDOC Week, OTDF also held a virtual yarn to talk about the importance and history of NAIDOC throughout the Aboriginal community. The event was hosted by OTDF Chairperson Vicki Clark OAM with other Trustees, including Shelley Ware, Dr Julie Andrews, Jason Kelly and Melissa Brickell, sharing their insights.

Trustees were joined by some of the Foundation's supporters and some very moving conversations ensued exploring where NAIDOC has come from and what it means to the Trustees. We hope to do this again next year.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING PROGRAM

In response to the social and emotional stress placed on students and families by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation launched a new grant called the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program earlier this year. The grant was instigated by the OTDF Trustees based on family and school feedback on the importance of school camps and excursions. These opportunities provide valuable experiences for students.

In 2022, OTDF was able to support 15 students with more than \$ 6,941 SEWB support in total to travel throughout Victoria as well as around the country to experience culture, Country, educational opportunities and social development. The Foundation would like to share their experiences with you. You can read our students' reflections on the camps and excursions below.



*St Damien's Primary School Bundoora
– Students made placards to use
during a March.*

JORDY MIFSUD

Jordy Mifsud is a Gunditjmarra, Peek Whurrong and Maltese woman who has done amazing work in the AFLW and the Victorian Aboriginal community over the past decade. As one of Opening The Doors Foundation alumni, she is now a leader for many Aboriginal students and aspiring athletes.

Jordy has been working in a variety of roles using her platform to support the Aboriginal community, including as part of the First Peoples Assembly. She is currently a Policy Advisor at the Business Council of Australia. In her short career, she has already done a lot, though this is just the beginning.

We had a chance to catch up last month and reflect on her story from school to now as a young Aboriginal woman living in Naarm, on what inspires her and on Opening The Doors Foundation.



Image right: Jordy Mifsud with her Brownlow medal.

Being part of the VFL now and seeing a pathway for progression has definitely driven my passion to want to make it in the AFL. The main reason I want to make it is that having that kind of platform would be beneficial to drive a lot of the messages that I want to drive, particularly in the Indigenous justice space.

I was the first Indigenous woman to win Best and Fairest at Hawthorn. For me, I just hope it inspired other young Aboriginal girls to follow their passion for footy or whatever other sport it is. I think that representation is really important; for them to see that they can achieve something like that and even go to the next level, that representation is so critical. Unless you can see yourself in someone else's shoes, you just don't think it's a possibility.

Working with community makes work so much easier. You're surrounded by mob. You continue to learn culturally and continue to grow as an individual. It feeds my soul a lot being part of those organisations and being surrounded by those kinds of people.

I really do love working with kids, particularly with young Aboriginal kids. I want to work wherever I can have the biggest impact. Particularly for Indigenous people, there's still a lot of wrongs that need to be righted. I take great pride in a lot of the mentoring work that I do. It's so easy. You just call up your little sister and have a yarn and support them during whatever they're going through.

JORDY'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

My siblings and I, we were the only Aboriginal kids at my school which wasn't too bad because it empowered us to drive Indigenous education amongst our peers and our teachers so that was really empowering in itself.

They had a lot of opportunities for us to participate in and were supportive of us throughout our high school. My nan would bring in some of our traditional artefacts and old pictures of our family up on the Framlingham Mission and do a tour with them all at lunchtime with anyone who would show up and was interested to talk through what the different things were. We got to raise the flag with my nan; then we got to speak at assembly in front of the whole school. The teachers in general were really supportive of us being Indigenous and doing whatever was appropriate.

I really immersed myself in sport. I was basically playing sport every week, every term. I think that really enabled me to become confident in myself and my abilities. Women's footy wasn't a thing anyone really talked about and it wasn't really an option that I necessarily thought was viable to me as a teenager. We only started playing footy in Year 10 through to Year 12.

Without the support of OTDF, I wouldn't have been able to go on exchange for 3 weeks to Japan. I look back and it's still one of the best times of my life going over there and I really want to go back. It's such a beautiful country. It's rich in culture which obviously I resonate pretty highly with. So through that I became aware of the Foundation and some of the amazing support they provided students like myself.

JORDY'S ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

Just give everything your all and apply yourself as much as you can to all the different opportunities that present themselves to you because you never know what might happen. You might fail at something but at least you know you've given it your all and looking back, you'll have no regrets. Particularly nowadays, with the extra pressure that technology brings to us, try to numb the noise a little bit and be more confident in yourselves. Really just apply yourselves as much as you can.

Don't be afraid to ask for support. I think a lot of people are too concerned about what people might think of them if they reach out, particularly in our community. There's no shame in asking for help. Definitely lean on OTDF and other foundations that can provide any support. It can change your life.

See the full article www.openingthedoors.org.au/jordy-mifsud



St Patrick's Primary School, Kilmore – Footy Colours Day.

2022 GRANT ROUND

In 2022, OTDF supported 994 students. That's 177 more than the number of students supported in 2021! Below you can see where we spent funds in 2022 and how many students in each year level were supported. All funds were provided by community and philanthropic donors.

Category	Expenditure
Books	\$106,304
Camps & Excursions	\$5,325
SEWB / Health and Wellbeing	\$6,941
Information Technology	\$57,147
Shoes	\$23,169
Tuition Fees and Levies	\$232,275
Uniforms	\$299,856
Total Grants	\$731,017

Year Level	Number of Students
Prep	66
1	90
2	80
3	80
4	73
5	71
6	71
7	86
8	89
9	99
10	76
11	65
12	48
Total	994

DONATE TO THE FOUNDATION

Opening The Doors Foundation relies entirely on community fundraising as it does not receive government funds. Donate today and you will be supporting Aboriginal students to realise their dreams through education. You can contact finance@openingthedoors.org.au or 1300 236 356. You can also give directly by EFT to the bank details below. Just let us know so that we can provide a receipt.

Account Name: Opening The Doors Foundation
BSB 033 067
Account number 194744

All donations over \$2 are 100% tax-deductible.

ABN 20 671 392 558

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

Opening The Doors Foundation wishes to thank all its supporters who enable it to continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to pursue education of their choice.

Thank you to all our supporters who help to keep our doors open. We would especially like to thank the following organisations for their contributions:

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation
Archbishop's Charitable Fund
RM Ansett Trust
The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation
The Eric and Elizabeth Gross Foundation
The Anthony Costa Foundation
The Killen Family Foundation
The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst
The Merrin Foundation
The Jeff Kennett Grant
Equity Trustees
The Ross Family Trust
The Bank of Melbourne
Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament
Hamilton Australia
Bloomberg Philanthropy
Myers Family
Arthur Family
Guillaume Family
Charles Balnaves

