

JUNE 2025 NEWSLETTER

# IMPACT



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



Heathdale Christian College - fundraiser for OTDF



## Vicki Clark OAM

Right now, something truly historic is unfolding in our country. First Nations leaders and Elders are doing the heavy lifting—working tirelessly in the face of challenge and resistance—to lead the way toward justice through the TREATY process and the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

These efforts are about more than words. They are about truth-telling, accountability, and finally creating a fairer and more honest future for our people. TREATY is the opportunity to formally recognise First Nations sovereignty, to restore self-determination, and to rebuild trust through meaningful agreements between Aboriginal peoples and governments. The Yoorrook Justice Commission, the first truth-telling process of its kind in Australia, is laying bare the impact of colonisation and systemic injustice, making way for healing and real change. But as we walk through this pivotal moment, I'm thinking not only of our Elders—I'm thinking of our young people. Our children are watching. They're listening. And they're learning what it looks like to stand in truth, to lead with dignity, and to demand a better future.

At OTDF, we believe our role is clear: to walk beside our children, to make sure they have the opportunity to step into that future with pride, knowledge, and strength. This year once again, with your help, OTDF supported over 1,000 First Nations. That support means more than schoolbooks and uniforms—it means belief. It means cultural connection. It means walking alongside families who have too often been left behind and telling them, "You matter. We see you. And we're with you." You're not just funding education—you're investing in futures. You're helping to write a new story for our children: one of strength, hope, and cultural pride.

From the bottom of my heart—thank you. Thank you for walking with us, for caring, and for believing in a better future for our young people.

In strength and solidarity, Vicki.

**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**  
4th of August 2025

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

The 2025 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day theme is **'Little Footsteps, Big Future'** and honours the journeys our children take as they grow.

Walk or organise an event of your choice to raise funds for First Nations students on the day or that week.

Register your 2025 event as a school or individual  
<https://opening-the-doors-foundation-together-we-walk-2025.raiselysite.com/>



Opening The Doors Foundation  
Keeping Koorie Kids in an Education of their Choice for 25 years

Artwork-Vicki Clark OAM

## Together We Walk! 4th August

### Walk-a-thon and fundraising events 2025

As we approach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on August 4th, the Opening The Doors Foundation invites schools, community groups, churches, and workplaces to participate in our 4th annual walk-a-thon in the days leading up to and following the event. This year, the theme is **"Little Footsteps, Big Future,"** highlighting the potential of every child to make a significant impact. In 2024, groups successfully raised over \$8,000 for OTDF, and we hope to see even more schools join us in 2025!

Throughout the week of August 4th groups across Victoria will come together to walk laps around their ovals, raising funds to support First Nations students in achieving equality in education. Schools also have the option to organise alternative fundraising events to contribute. We encourage you to join us in supporting First Nations students!

For more information and to register, please visit:

<https://opening-the-doors-foundation-together-we-walk-2025.raiselysite.com/> or email us at [firecarriers@openingthedoors.org.au](mailto:firecarriers@openingthedoors.org.au).

## You can't be what you can't see – the power of being seen

### Beaconhills College RAP launch

In May, we proudly commissioned four new FIRE Carrier Schools, bringing the total in the Melbourne Archdiocese to over 100. With additional Catholic schools across the Sandhurst, Sale, and Ballarat Dioceses, the FIRE Carrier program continues to grow into a strong network of schools committed to genuine reconciliation.

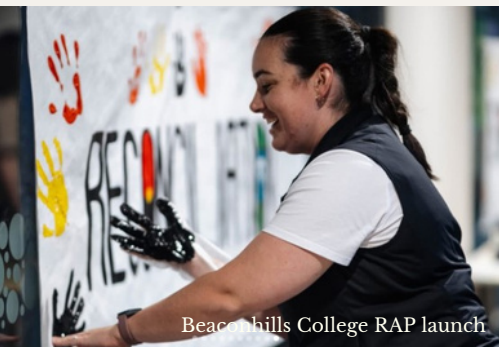
A key responsibility of FIRE Carrier Schools is to raise awareness and fundraise for the Opening the Doors Foundation (OTDF)—supporting the educational aspirations of First Nations students. This commitment not only helps fund education grant but also affirms each school's dedication to fostering self-determination and cultural respect for First Nations families, both within their own communities and beyond.



Beaconhills College RAP launch

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all FIRE Carrier Schools for their continued fundraising and awareness-raising efforts. Through your support, countless First Nations students have accessed greater educational opportunities Catholic schools across Victoria. The FIRE Carrier Program transforms schools into culturally safe spaces where First Nations students and families feel seen, valued, and welcomed. One Yorta Yorta student at a recent commissioning shared how proud she was to see her culture reflected at her new school, saying it felt like "coming home."

Importantly, support for the Opening the Doors Foundation extends beyond the Catholic education sector.



Beaconhills College RAP launch

Beaconhills College, an independent school in Melbourne's southeast, recently raised funds for OTDF as part of its Reconciliation Action Plan launch, generously donating all proceeds from the event. Over the years, the college has contributed more than \$8,000 to the foundation—reflecting a sustained and genuine commitment to advancing educational opportunities for First Nations students within its community. College Board Chair Dr David Moseley captured the spirit of the evening, saying:

"Tonight is a reminder of the journey we're all on together—one of listening, learning, and walking alongside one another. It's a journey that renews our determination to create a more respectful, inclusive, and reconciled future."



# Changing the game: How educational support helped Kirra shine on and off the field

At just 16, Kirra’s journey is one of quiet determination and resilience—made brighter by the support of the Opening The Doors Foundation. A proud First Nations young woman, Kirra is in Year 11 at Assumption College in Kilmore, where she’s thriving academically and athletically. Living with a disability and managing a history of seizures, Kirra has faced challenges that would overwhelm many. But with a dream of becoming a paramedic, she’s showing that no barrier—be it health, learning difficulties, or financial hardship, can hold her back. This year, Kirra shone at the ACT Championships, winning two gold medals in the under-20s Women’s Para division and setting a new Australian record in shot put. She is now internationally classified and eligible to compete at the World Championships and Para Games. Thanks to the Foundation’s support, Kirra has access to the educational resources and the school that has helped her achieve success. Despite difficulties in english and maths, she recently received an Academic Achievement Award in maths and continues to make strong progress. “Without the Foundation, Kirra would not have been able to attend the school of her choice and would have struggled socially and academically,” her mum shares. “I couldn’t have done it alone.” Kirra’s story is a powerful reminder: when you help open the door, incredible things can happen.



Kirra

## Immersion in cultural opportunities

Thanks to your generous support, OTDF was proud to support a group of Loreto College students in attending a recent cultural immersion camp on the Gold Coast. It was an experience designed to strengthen their connection to First Nations identity, culture, and Country.

The students visited the Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Burleigh Heads, a sacred place for the Yugambah people. There, they were guided along the Dreaming Mountain, visited natural ochre sites, and took part in a traditional ochre ceremony, learning how this sacred resource is used in art, dance, and storytelling. Throughout the camp, students engaged in cultural activities including weaving with Aboriginal women, participating in traditional dances and songs, and listening to Dreamtime stories passed down through generations. They also learned about bush tucker—native foods and medicines—and how these have sustained communities for thousands of years.



Loreto Students - Gold Coast Cultural Trip

The experience helped students build a stronger sense of pride, belonging, and cultural knowledge. Many described it as a turning point in how they understand themselves and their heritage. As one student shared, “I felt proud, strong, and connected. This camp helped me understand where I come from and who I am.” The camp’s purpose was to empower young First Nations students to walk confidently in their culture, and thanks to yours and OTDF’s support, that goal was truly achieved.

Category	Expenditure
Uniforms	\$192,732
Levies-camps	\$182,822
Books	\$83,228
IT/laptops	\$54,974
School shoes	\$16,758
Sport shoes	\$15,820
VET/VCAL fees	\$1,000
Total Grants	\$547,334

## Students supported in 2025

Thank you for standing with our First Nations students this year, ensuring they had access to the educational resources they need to thrive. Because of your generosity, 1,010 students received vital support—helping them stay strong in school, stay connected to culture, and stay proud of who they are. From school uniforms to books, laptops to shoes, your support has opened doors that may otherwise have remained closed. We truly couldn’t have done this without you. You are helping to build a future grounded in strength, hope, and cultural pride—and for that, we are deeply grateful!



Miley - OTDF beneficiary

# Stories of Impact - 2024

## Faith and values

*"The grant helps support Simon's education at a smaller school, where he can receive more personalized attention and resources to overcome his learning challenges. In addition to his academic growth, the grant also enables him to learn and embrace the values that come with being part of a Catholic school community.*

*Being at a Catholic school has helped him develop a deeper understanding of the important values in life. The school's emphasis on faith, compassion, and community has played a key role in shaping his character and personal growth."*

## Single mum helped

*"We are forever grateful to the OTDF! The grants have helped me immensely as a single mother with two children. Trying to keep my kids in the Catholic education system would not likely be possible without the help of the grants each year. Thank you for everything you do to help our kids and families! "*

## Starting right

*"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 and has provided towards setting her up for success. She has blossomed this year."*

## Bright future ahead

*"Adam has had a fantastic year at Marist, having made new connections, expanding on his interests, and staying positive towards his studies. He has chosen electives for year 9 that he is really excited about, and can see some career options forming in his future. We are so grateful for the support of the OTDF in enabling him to have the right IT equipment to succeed at school, and for supporting us to keep him dressed in the right size uniforms while he grows like a weed!*

*The good news is that Adam is able to fully participate in school due to the support of OTDF. He has access to everything he needs in order to fit in and succeed. The foundation is the only option available to us in order to financially subsidise our choice to send Adam to a Catholic School. The fees are high but we have chosen this as we believe it's what's best for him both educationally and spiritually.*

*Without the support of the Opening The Doors Foundation, we would struggle financially to afford the extra things above and beyond fees, like uniforms, shoes and IT. Teenage boys grow so much, and keeping him dressed appropriately for school is an expensive exercise, on top of fees and the general cost of living. We cannot overstate the relief it brings us, knowing that we can apply for this support each year. Thank you."*

## Opportunities given

*"Carla has thrived in Food Technology this year, working alongside her sister. This subject has provided her with valuable skills that could shape her future career. Opportunities like this often come with associated levies, which were made possible through the grant she received. Your support in 2024 made a significant difference for our family. Given the rising cost of living, we had considered transferring the girls to a more affordable school, but the financial assistance allowed them to stay at St Ignatius. This has been invaluable, as the College provides opportunities they wouldn't have had elsewhere. We are deeply grateful for the grant and hope it continues to support many families like ours."*



Ochor - OTDF beneficiary

*Donate today at this link or at website below*

Get in Touch

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