

IMPACT



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



Thank you to our FIRE Carrier schools for participating in Reconciliation activities and raising funds to make a difference to First Nations students.

FIRE Carrier schools

Vicki Clark OAM - Chair OTDF

As the Chairperson of this incredible organisation, I'm humbled by the 21% increase to individual students grants over the last two years but it has come at a cost to OTDFs viable future - as donations and funders have reduced due to the current cost of living crisis. Our team are putting in every effort to build fundraising opportunities, grant proposals and partnerships with Traditional Owner groups. The future ahead has many challenges and we need your support to continue.

Opening The Doors Foundation was founded on the principle of providing equal opportunities and access to education for all, regardless of background or circumstances. Our unwavering commitment to this mission has led us to remarkable achievements over the past year.

We have witnessed the transformational power of education in the lives of those we support. From grants that enable bright minds to pursue their dreams to community initiatives that uplift First Nations students. Our success would not be possible without the dedication and support of our incredible team, partners, and donors. Your unwavering belief in our mission and your continuous support have fuelled our progress and enabled us to reach new heights. Together, we have created a network of change-makers who are shaping a brighter future for First Nations children.

Looking ahead, we will continue to forge partnerships, develop innovative programs, and push the boundaries of what is possible. Our goal remains steadfast: to open doors that were previously closed, and to provide opportunities that can transform lives. In the coming months, you can expect to hear more success stories and opportunities for you to get involved and make a difference.

Thank you for your ongoing support, your dedication to our mission, and your belief in the power of education to change lives. Together, we are truly opening doors and building a better world.

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! Thank You

In the lead up to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on the 4th of August, 15 schools held events to raise funds for OTDF. We thank all staff, students and school communities who participated and raised over \$6500! Special thanks to Iona Collge in Geelong and Catholic Ladies College in Eltham, for being some of our highest secondary school fundraisers in Victoria! St Josephs Primary School in Yarra Junction was the highest primary school fundraiser. Other schools who participated included Maharishi School who ran a Fun Run and students wore the colours of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flags and St Francis Primary School in Wodonga held fundraising events and planted 700 trees!



Maharishi School



St Josephs Primary School

Thank you to all 15 schools who participated!

Avila College - Top Fundraising School

Avila College Year 7 students enthusiastically embraced the Together We Walk event, raising \$1439- the most funds of any school in Victoria. Students enthusiastically set up a "My Walkathon Passport" and information stations throughout the school displaying First Nations people, history and culture - recording all they learned along the way. Each of the 7 homerooms had their own team for fundraising worked together.



Avila College bollards

My Walkathon Passport

The information stations on display included culture and history, the language map, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples, and artwork. The FIRE Carrier Program at Avila was a feature displaying the ongoing connection with the Lyenye Apurte community that started in the 1970s. Avila College has a long history with the FIRE Carrier Program and has a highly active Reconciliation Group. The Wominjeka Room was set up with information about Closing the Gap statistics and students were invited to share how these statistics made them feel. A visit to the library showed information about the Voice to Parliament, the upcoming referendum, and the Uluru Statement. The Avila Reconciliation banner was proudly displayed. The Proud Race Bollards together with a video of different First Nations Peoples and their achievements were exhibited in the hall. Students enthusiastically travelled to each bollard to record facts about the featured First Nations person. There was a great air of excitement as students moved from one location to another and filled in their walkathon passport. It was a wonderful, fun way to learn more and raise money for First Nations students and the Opening the Doors Foundation.

Thank you Avila College for your fantastic fundraising effort this year and your ongoing support of the FIRE Carrier Program.

Save the date now for next years event-
2nd of August 2024



John has now officially retired as a Trustee of OTDF. OTDF thanks John for his incredible 23-year contribution and commitment, that has benefited thousands of First Nations Families.

It was the year 2000 . 250,000 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people's walked across the Sydney Harbour Bridge to show their support for Reconciliation. Australian and Aboriginal flags flew side by side on top of the Bridge and a skywriter wrote 'Sorry' in the sky. It was the year of Reconciliation.

It was also the year that Vicki Clark, John Arthur and Carol Messer began the Opening The Doors Foundation. Vicki witnessed the need firsthand of First Nations families and had a dream to help, inspired by her mum who used to support First Nations families with books and shoes. John had the commercial background and the desire to assist and helped to set up the foundation and make that dream a reality. Carol gave her time and professional secretarial support.

A partnership was born and continued for the next 23 years, assisting over 12,000 students with \$7 million in grants dispersed.

A partnership that was meant to be....

By John Arthur OAM, Co-founder and Trustee of OTDF

Melbourne had a similar walk to Sydney's event - from Flinders St Station to King's Domain which drew 300,000 walkers. I participated in that walk after attending an Aboriginal cultural weekend experience at Gariwerd (Grampians National Park). That experience had a significant impact on me personally and created a desire to learn more about our First Nations peoples culture, but more importantly, do something meaningfully towards trying to correct the wrong doings of the past and the historic disadvantage that these people were experiencing.

Through a mutual friend, I was introduced to Vicki who inspired me with her enthusiasm for driving change. I asked her what her dream was, and she explained how she saw a gap in the educational needs of First Nations students who wanted to self-determine their choice of education and be able to attend non-government schools - which were beyond their financial capacity. Vicki also believed that the First Nations Community felt that they did not have a presence at Independent schools, and it wasn't a level playing field.

This challenge connected with me as I had been closely involved on a pro bono basis, with education of youth through my association with two large independent school organisations in the Catholic Education sector. I have always considered the importance of education as fundamental to improving life outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged members of the Community who didn't have the financial means to access a more suitable education. I could see how widening the educational choice to the non-government education sector for First Nations families would enhance this opportunity.

I had left big business in 1990. My experience with the First Nations Community was very limited. Whilst I was working with a large multi-national mining resource company, I didn't have direct contact with First Nations people. I recall they were offered employment and training opportunities but very much at the local level. There was little talk of understanding the importance of Aboriginal culture, past wrong doings, or reconciliation.

My learning of First Nations culture is an ongoing journey. I have learnt that you never hear the full story in one yarn; it is ongoing with many yarns. From my association with Vicki and other First Nations people, I have learnt to respect the land and nature which the wider population can take for granted and why it is important in First Nations culture and beliefs. The importance of family in a wider sense than western family experience has also been a learning outcome.

My journey of 23 years with Vicki and OTDF has been enlightening and rewarding. To have had the opportunity to be part of the journey and to experience the improving outcomes for our First Nations students is an output that is beyond my expectations when I commenced my yarning with Vicki.

Jayda Kennedy is a Yorta Yorta student in Year 10 in regional Victoria. This year she was chosen to take part in a rare work experience opportunity developed by Zoos Victoria to inspire the next generation of youth to work with wildlife and attended a 5-day program at Healesville Sanctuary. The Opening The Doors Foundation has supported Jayda with educational items and was proud to support accommodation costs for Jayda's trip to Healesville.



"It is so great that OTDF helped to give me this opportunity!"
Jayda

Dreaming of Possibilities

Jayda is excited for her future and the possibility of her dream to be a vet - specifically a livestock vet - could become a reality if she had the experience and right education opportunities to achieve it. Jayda says *"I've had a love of animals for as long as I can remember and want to be a voice for them. I don't just love animals, but I would really like to help people to be able to take care of them. Growing up on a cattle and sheep farm and working with livestock, I've always wanted to work with cattle. I would love to explore all sorts of animal workforces. When this opportunity came up to do a rare work experience placement at Healesville Sanctuary - I was so excited!"* Her teachers knew of her dream and encouraged her to apply. The cost was prohibitive given Jayda would have to leave her regional home and travel to Healesville and stay in accommodation. Her mum approached OTDF for assistance and we willingly assisted. She thoroughly enjoyed her placement.

"It's given me a new insight. I've never really heard anything about what it's like to work in a zoo - it has truly opened up a whole new world to me. I did expect some of it, but a lot of it was surprising to me. Schools came in to learn, I helped feed the animals and clean their environments. I learned about horticulture, made an enclosure for the koalas and I was involved with the vet clinic. Just about every aspect of zoo life I got right in to. It was really inclusive of Aboriginal culture. I thought it was really great. We were down on Wurundjeri Country and they were teaching about that. The cafés had cultural names. They have the Wurundjeri walk and there's heaps of culture involved in everything there."

Thank you to all our supporters

The Opening The Doors Foundation wishes to thank all its supporters who enable us to continue to support First Nations students to pursue the education of their choice.

We would especially like to thank the following organisations for their contributions during

Financial Year 2023:

The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation

The Guillaume Family

The Coopers Foundation

William Buckland Foundation

The Anthony Costa Foundation

The Eric and Elizabeth Gross Foundation

Equity Trustees - Past Chair's Gift

The Killen Family Foundation

The Archbishop's Charitable Fund

Archdiocese of Melbourne

The Oliver Morrice Williams Family Trust

The Arthur Family

The Myers Family

William Angliss Charitable Fund

Wood Australia Pty Ltd

6A Foundation

Fr Charles Balnaves

Software Management Facilities

2023 Grants

In 2023, OTDF supported 986 students. The organisation has awarded 21% more individual student grants over the last two years. This growth has been supported by funds provided by philanthropic donors.

Grant expenditure

Category	Expenditure
Books	\$93,514
Well-being / health	\$33,724
IT/Laptops	\$33,548
Extra curricular levies	\$290,497
Shoes	14,470
Sports Shoes	\$50,796
Uniforms	\$233,442
VET/VCAL	\$1,026
Total Grants	\$751,021