



# OPENING THE DOORS FOUNDATION

*Keeping Koorie Kids in an Education of their Choice*

JUNE NEWSLETTER 2022

## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Let me start with a significant update! To date, we have funded over 1,000 student grants for 2022, compared with 817 in 2021. This is the first time in OTDF's 20-year history that more than 1,000 students have been assisted in one year. The increased support is largely due to the return to more normal school attendance, as we move forward from the pandemic-imposed school restrictions of the previous two years, and a growing awareness of OTDF's role in helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families self-determine the education of their choice.

We are putting a lot of efforts towards fundraising at this time. In June we are holding a schools walk-a-thon in the lead up to NAIDOC Week. It is titled Get Up! Show Up! Get Walking! Thank you to all the schools that are taking part in the walk-a-thon. The Foundation has decided to join in and have our own team. I will be doing laps around my local oval near Swan Hill. The shortfall of school fundraising in recent years has affected the income of the Foundation so I am very inspired to see schools ready to support the Foundation again so soon after getting back into classrooms. I would also like to thank the schools which have managed to continue fundraising over the last few years. These donations were so important to us and our work. I note with appreciation that the support of Black and White Stories has made our walk-a-thon possible.

Thank you to our staff and volunteers for your culturally welcoming support and response when families call about applying to OTDF. For the first time, we established a help desk team to assist families with our new online application process – great work team!

For many young Aboriginal students, competing in the educational world is really difficult unless they have, for example, the books from which to learn and the uniform in which to feel good about their appearance. Further, now that the COVID restrictions have been lifted the Trustees are proud to announce our new support initiative, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program (see below).

We are so grateful to the many individuals, schools, parishes, trusts and foundations that generously support educational opportunities to help transform the lives of Aboriginal families. Thank you for walking with us!

We are now preparing for the 2023 grant round and hope to raise enough funds to provide more support to students and their families next year. I am grateful to all who continue to support our students on their education journeys.

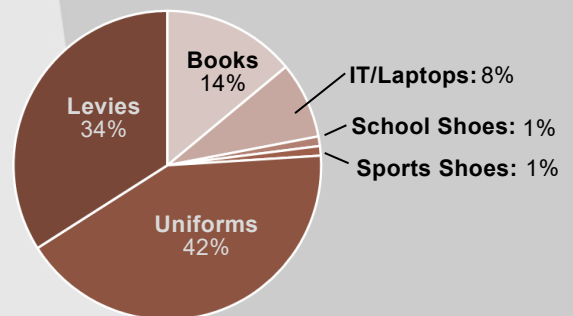
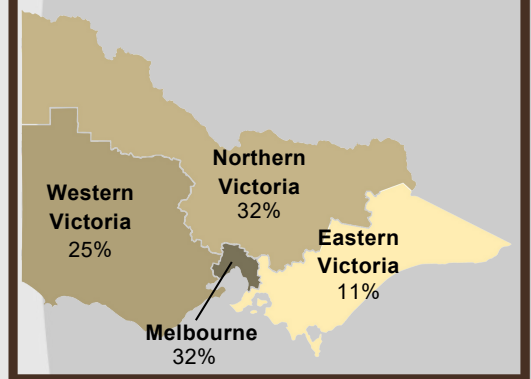
Aunty Vicki Clark OAM

## 2022 GRANT ROUND

In 2022 the Foundation has been able to support over 1,000 students with more than \$750,000 distributed. This is the highest number of requests that we have ever seen! Significantly, more than 80 percent of our students did not receive any funding from other sources.

The Foundation is still paying school costs in 2022. The figures below are based on payments made to date. The final figures will be shown in the Activity Report for 2022 later this year.

## GEOGRAPHY OF STUDENTS



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.



# stories from our students



*"Colby has been awarded School Captain for 2022. She is the first Indigenous school captain in their history and it is the first time that 2 females are captains instead of the traditional one male and one female. The grant we have received each year is what has allowed Colby to continue to attend this school.*

*Colby did a fantastic job during 2021 juggling VCE, remote learning and studying year 12 English in year 11. She was the first student at her school to have ever completed English a year early.*

***"The Foundation supported Alex to get a new computer in 2021. In a year where most school was undertaken during lockdown, this support was critical in Alex's success in 2021, ensuring that her equipment was reliable and fit for purpose. Alex was also lucky enough to visit family in Arnhem Land in the middle of the year (prior to our last lockdown). Ensuring she has this reliable IT capability was critical to ensuring she was able to effectively complete schoolwork whilst maintaining connections with family.***

***The Foundation provides amazing support to the kids and Alexandra's sister has recently successfully finished year 12. This achievement was supported by the Foundation and we are very thankful."***



*"Aidan has come a long way with his writing and punctuation skills in the past 12 months. Aidan's teacher said he set himself some high goals to achieve this year and he has worked very hard to achieve them.*

*Aidan has joined the Short Black Opera group lead by Deborah Cheetham. Aidan is really enjoying singing with the group. He is looking forward to next year when they will have some 4 day singing camps with a goal to sing with the Victorian Philharmonic Orchestra later in the year.*

*The grant takes a lot of financial pressure off us. Without the help from you I don't think we could afford to send him to this school".*

*"Evie is the only Aboriginal girl at her school. She is very proud and loves to show people her photo on the Opening the Doors website. The school took down their flagpoles a few years ago and never put them up again. Evie decided to write a letter to the Principals requesting that the Aboriginal flag be flown again before she finishes Grade 6. She has made contact with a local MP who is going to contribute to the cost of new poles and flags and they have also designed a new Indigenous garden for the flagpole area. She returned to her Primary school in 2022 to raise the new flags and open the garden. She wanted to make sure her brother Charlie had the flags flying there once she left.*

*Evie and Charlie love being a part of their local community and the grants connect them to something bigger and make them proud and determined to do well in school. Evie loves attending youth group with the local Aboriginal Co-op. She supports all the young ones in the group and would love to be a leader in the community in some area involving children and young people.*

*Evie feels part of the bigger Aboriginal community that exists for her both locally and nationally. She is proud of who she is and her identity is strong. She sometimes struggles with her learning but her teachers are amazing at incorporating First Nations perspectives to engage her and find ways for her to complete work that allows her to use what she knows."*



*"Amelia completed year 11 successfully considering the challenges with another year of restrictions relating to COVID-19. She worked with the school and tutors to work through any issues with her homework or preparing with exams.*

*She received an invitation from the school's principal to supply artwork to the school's recently developed library. It has also been included on the school's administrative documents and background on the website."*

<https://www.emmanuel.vic.edu.au/alumni/alumni/amelia-bell-profile-non-alumni>

<https://www.emmanuel.vic.edu.au/acknowledgement-of-land>

*"We are very appreciative of the support you have provided over the years. I've recently become involved with our local Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in Warrnambool and we have been engaging with the school offering information of any events / activities we are planning to make sure we are reaching out to all Koorie students and families."*

## GET UP! STAND UP! GET WALKING!

In the leadup to NAIDOC Week, students will fundraise by walking as many laps as possible around their ovals and seeking sponsorship. All donations will support educational needs of Aboriginal students. We have set up a platform to see which schools walk the most laps and raise the most funds. Some schools are even entering teams of students!

Check out what is happening or sponsor your local school at:

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

### Support our Vicki Clark to walk 100 laps for the Foundation

Chairperson and one of our founders, Vicki Clark, will walk 100 laps at her local oval in Nyah as part of Get Up! Show Up! Get Walking! You can support Vicki's fundraising efforts via the QR code.



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

### Want to give back? Become a volunteer!

Opening The Doors Foundation has an amazing team of volunteers who allow us to provide as much support as possible to our students and their families. If you would like to contribute your time and skills to the Foundation, contact: [enquiries@openingthedoors.org.au](mailto:enquiries@openingthedoors.org.au)

## Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program

Based on feedback from schools, the Foundation has launched a new grant to support students to attend camps and excursions and to travel on Country in response to the social and emotional stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These opportunities are important for students to grow and feel nurtured after such a difficult time. The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program has seen a lot of interest in the past few months, and we look forward to sharing with you later in the year the outcomes of the first round of applications.

### Ballarat Grammar

Opening The Doors Foundation was pleased to take part in a Year 9 unit on Equality offered by Ballarat Grammar and which focused on the areas of the Aboriginal community, family violence, LGBTQIA+ community and people living with disability. Students researched respected leaders in their chosen sector and created a pitch for raising awareness. Trustee of the Foundation, Professor Gabrielle McMullen AM, travelled to Ballarat to take part in a panel who judged the best pitch. Students also fundraised for the Foundation, giving back to Aboriginal students across Victoria.

### DONATE TODAY!

Help the Foundation support Aboriginal students to access the education of their choice. Your donation will support the next generation of Aboriginal leaders, thinkers and change agents to achieve their dreams. All donations, big or small, will help to make this happen.

To donate go to

<https://www.openingthedoors.org.au/donate>



## OPENING THE DOORS FOUNDATION

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