

Here are a few of the students supported by OTDF, provided by our schools.



**Left:** St Patrick's Ballarat

**Bottom left:** St Joseph's Primary School Orbost

**Bottom:** Worawa Girls College 2019



## Thank you to all of our supporters

In 2020, our dedicated supporters have again been instrumental in ensuring the success of our program. We recognise the generous contributions from schools including our devoted FIRE Carriers, parishes, regular donors, community groups and philanthropic partners. The generosity of donors has allowed us to continue to support the educational goals of Aboriginal families in Victoria and significantly to reach a major milestone in 2020, namely two decades of the OTDF program which has seen remarkable growth.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped to keep much of the office going in 2020, particularly Lilian Hobson, and John and Lorraine Farlow. If it wasn't for their dedication we would not have been able to support families as well as we did during lockdown. We'd also like to thank John O'Hallaran and his team of Brothers for their invaluable help with the Christmas ornament sales.

If you would like to volunteer, donate to, or learn more about the Opening The Doors Foundation, go to [www.openingthedoors.org.au](http://www.openingthedoors.org.au) or email us at [enquiries@openingthedoors.org.au](mailto:enquiries@openingthedoors.org.au).

If your workplace participates in workplace giving, you can sign up on our website.

## We would especially like to thank the following

The Carmel and Noel O'Brien Foundation  
The Eric and Elizabeth Gross Foundation  
Youth in Philanthropy  
RMIT University  
The Guillaume Family  
Ross Trust  
Costa Foundation  
Archdiocese of Melbourne  
L.Arthur Pty Ltd  
Arnold Bloch Leibler  
Fr Charles Balnave  
The Myers Family  
Blessed Sacrament Congregation  
Tobin Brothers Foundation  
Binnap Partners  
Trustees of the Christian Brothers

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# OPENING THE DOORS FOUNDATION

*Keeping Koorie Kids in an Education of their Choice*

ABN 20 671 392 558

## Special Edition Newsletter 2021

### Chair's Report

Opening The Doors Foundation (OTDF) is happy to announce its continued support to even more Aboriginal families during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. 856 students were supported last year, including some 100 students who received funding from the Foundation for the first time. We have been working hard over the summer to prepare Aboriginal students for the 2021 school year. This is now continuing as our students settle into their school.

We are releasing this special edition newsletter to share with you the stories of our families in 2020. It was a particularly challenging year, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting in-person classes and requiring families to support home schooling. The families we supported have impressed us greatly with their resilience. I would like to express admiration

and appreciation of the teachers and other school staff who worked with the Foundation to enable students to continue to be supported by OTDF. I would also like to thank schools and parishes which continued to help raise funds for the Foundation.

It was not surprising that many of our supporters were not able to donate, particularly schools, parishes and community organisations. We trust that 2021 will see a resurgence in fundraising by schools and parishes, together with other donations, to help us meet the growing demand for support for Victorian Aboriginal families.

In 2021 the Foundation will celebrate 20 years of supporting Aboriginal students in Victoria. It is pleasing and humbling to see how far we have come since 2001 with the support of our donors. The Foundation is extremely proud and happy to be where it is

today and it would not have been possible without the many people who fundraise, donate, share our story and otherwise help the Foundation to continue moving forward into a better future for Aboriginal families.

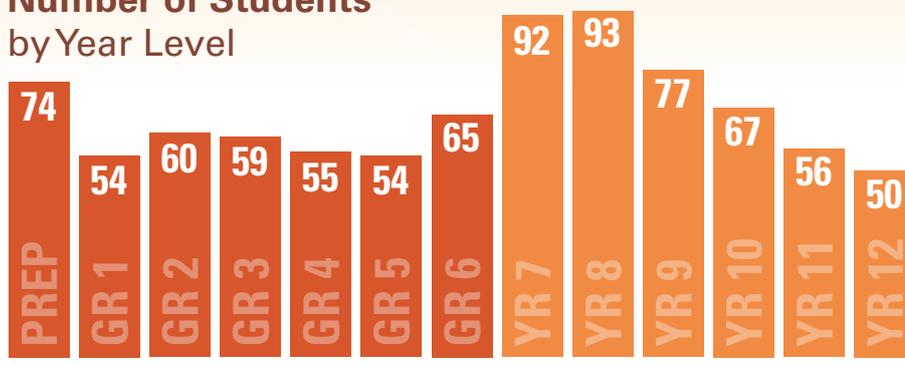
Let us remember that there are still young people left behind around Australia and the world. In particular, the challenge of "closing the educational gap" for Australia's First Peoples remains. Opening The Doors Foundation, with the support of its donors, will continue to address this challenge.

As we move forward with that goal into our 20th year, I would like to wish all OTDF supporters health and happiness.

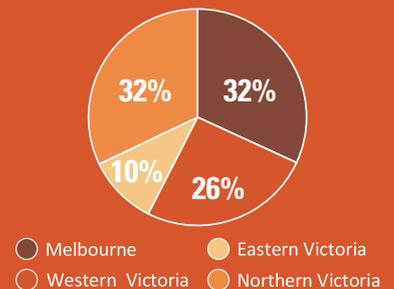
**Vicki Clark OAM, Chairperson**

on behalf of the Trustees of  
Opening The Doors Foundation

### Number of Students by Year Level

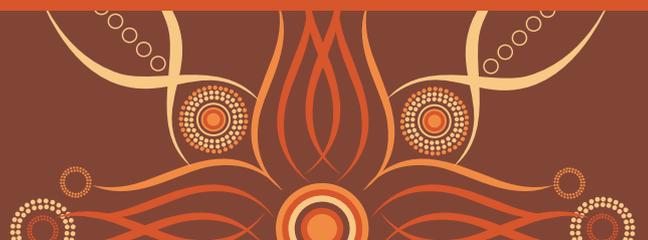


### Geography of OTDF 2020 Funding



The 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.



## OTDF 2001-2020



# We're turning 20 years old!

In 2021 OTDF will turn 20! OTDF was launched on 4 August 2001 as the only Aboriginal-governed organisation supporting Victorian Aboriginal students from Prep to Year 12. Two decades on, the Foundation is still critically important in ensuring that the Victorian Aboriginal community has determination over its children's education.

## Funding Made Virtual

For the 2020 grants round, the Foundation teamed up with students from RMIT University to develop and launch an online grant application and approval process. The online process has made the application procedure simpler for OTDF families and also helped the Foundation to accelerate the processing and approval of grants. This has allowed OTDF to deal effectively with the increasing number of applications and enhance its support of Victorian Aboriginal communities. The online process has played an especially important role in the last 12 months as families and students have dealt with the restrictions and challenges of working and studying at home due to the pandemic.

In this first year of online applications, over 60 per cent of families, representing over 500 OTDF students, submitted their application electronically. The Foundation has followed up with the families, seeking feedback on their experience of the new process. Their valued input has enabled us to enhance of the online application website for the 2021 round of applications.

We appreciate the team at RMIT who made this possible:

"I love that I could do the application online this year. I hope it continues."

"It is much easier than previous years"

"Very supportive and straight forward"



“ My husband was without work for a portion of 2020 and it was a relief to know we had that money for the kids education and uniform. It was one less thing we needed to worry about. ”

“ Chanel in grade one did her show and teach before COVID-19. She put together a small presentation about her mob the Kurnai people. During her presentation she showed pictures of Jacksons Track which is where her great great nan came from. I was amazed at all the big words in her presentation that she was able to read. ”

“ I don't know what I would do without the support of the grant, my fees have been really big the last 2 years with 3 children attending Catholic Schools. We are very thankful for the help we receive. I cannot thank you enough. ”

“ We are very thankful for the Foundations Grant. Without the grant there would be other things I would have to sacrifice for my children such as sports. I have 3 children attending Catholic schools, next year it is going to be a stretch for us particularly since I will have 2 in High school. My fees are going to be gigantic. ”

“ I've been pleased with how the school has supported and encourage Tahni since starting at the school this year. Tahni has embraced all of her school subjects and activities and the growth in her confidence is lovely to see. The grant from OTDF allowed our family to get the equipment and supplies to ensure Tahni felt like part of the school community immediately. Thank you. ”

“ Jyah became aware of the struggles faced with COVID-19 and started a fitness challenge to raise awareness. Deniliquin got behind him and his story was in the paper”

“ Joel is doing really well in this school, and has made lasting friendships. He says he's happy at this school and feels he has had a good year, loved doing the athletics training. I want to thank you for your assistance in the past few years, as it has made a big difference to my children's lives. Thank you, I am very grateful. ”

The newspaper reads “ a 13 year-old has set himself his own version of a health and fitness challenge to bring attention to bullying and youth suicide.

And he's bringing the Deniliquin Drivers Rugby Union Club along for the ride, challenging its players to double his daily exercise regime for each day this month.

While Jyah's challenge is more about raising awareness than funds, he said any money he does make will be donated to improve the facilities at his favourite recreation spot in Deniliquin.

“If I could raise a little bit of money, I would like to see the skate park fixed up a bit,” Jyah said.

“I wanted to start a challenge because youth suicide is really high, and bullying is a big problem too. ”

“ Starr is eager to start year 11 VCE and undertake VET hairdressing at TAFE Certificate 2/3 level. The foundation grant contributes to Starr's achievements and Starr is aware of the support she gets and greatly appreciates it. ”