17 July, 2019

Victorian Electoral Commission
Level 11,
530 Collins Street
Melbourne
VIC 3000

By email from: [Redacted]

Submission to Banyule City Council Electoral Representation Review

Olympic Adult Education, Inc. (OAE) helps address the deficiencies in literacy and basic education for the many educationally disadvantaged adults in West Heidelberg (postcode 3081).

Beyond delivering education as a Learn Local and accredited training as a Registered Training Organisation, OAE is also the Neighbourhood House of the area and is a not-for-profit Registered Charity.

Having been established to provide educational services to disadvantaged people in West Heidelberg, OAE continues to grow its educational services and do this well.

In addition, OAE continues to deliver community engagement projects as well as relief projects (principally food) to the disadvantaged and disabled who reside in West Heidelberg.

Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Data, of the suburbs making up the State of Victoria, West Heidelberg ranks amongst the most disadvantaged 1%.

Within the City of Banyule, West Heidelberg is the suburb with the highest Index of Socio – Economic Disadvantage.

Almost exclusively OAE’s clients reside within postcode 3081 and 3079 west of Waterdale Road (i.e. Bellfield). This is covered by the existing Olympia Ward. The current and long standing councilor representing Olympia Ward is Craig Langdon – who does an excellent job representing the disadvantaged client base of OAE and understands intimately the operations of Banyule Community Health and OAE.

Notwithstanding the above, OAE works closely with the other six councilors within BCC as OAE relies heavily on BCC support in order to operate as successfully as it does. BCC’s existing councilors understand OAE’s operations very well and understand the contribution that OAE makes to the community it services and the individuals within it. BCC, inter alia, has in the past financially subsidized and currently subsidizes the facilities from which OAE operates.
Increasing the number of councilors would only add another operational burden upon OAE. OAE would then need to keep a larger number of councilors informed of OAE’s activities in order to ensure that OAE obtains maximum support from BCC. The current Ward structure within BCC and the number of councilors representing the Wards is in the opinion of the Committee of Management of OAE working well and does not require any change.

Increasing the number of councilors would come at a significant cost. For example, two additional councilors will cost the ratepayers an extra $90,000 p.a., or $360,000 per term. Not only would this be in OAE’s opinion an unwarranted expense, this amount could be better served being directed to improving the facilities from which OAE operates.

If any area of the Olympia Ward must be relocated, from a demographic continuity perspective it would seem sensible to re-assign the Ivanhoe section east of Donaldson Reserve and the trail down to Livingstone Street or the Ivanhoe section from Bell Street to Banksia Street between Upper Heidelberg Road and Edwin Street.

Nevertheless, the Committee of Management of OAE is of the strongly held opinion that the needs of its client base are being well addressed by the current electoral structure of seven single member Wards in BCC and asks the question: “Why change something that works well for us?”

Yours faithfully,

John Nota
Chairperson, OAE

Copy:
Jeff Percy, CEO of OAE