

By email

28 February 2017

Mr Chris Thompson
Director, North Western Region
Department of Education and Training
Level 2, 189 Urquhart Street
Coburg VIC 3058

RE: Richmond High School and Melbourne Girls' College Enrolment Policy

Dear Chris,

Congratulations on the progress that has been made to date on the planning and construction of the highly anticipated Richmond High School.

Thanks also for your time on the telephone last Friday, following my media commentary regarding the proposed changes to the Melbourne Girls' College enrolment zone over the next three years.

In short, I sense that the 'goal posts have shifted' in Richmond, for a number of reasons:

- Between 1994 and 2017, the boys of Richmond have been disadvantaged by not residing within a zone for a public secondary school, and
- From 2020 onwards, the girls of Richmond will be disadvantaged by the proposed, reduced, neighbourhood enrolment boundary for Melbourne Girls' College.

It beggars belief, that for all the effort to secure a new co-educational high school for 650 children in Richmond, that girls who have been born and bred in Richmond, and who are currently attending a Primary School in Richmond, would no longer have the choice or entitlement to attend Melbourne Girls' College.

In essence, this means that some girls (depending on which street they live in) who:

- reside in the postcode of 3121, and
- are currently in Grade 4 or below at a Primary School in the 3121 postcode,
- will not be eligible or entitled to enrol at Melbourne Girls College in 2020 under the designated neighbourhood school policy.

Historical Context

In 1992, a group of local residents and activists picketed at the Richmond Secondary College to prevent it being closed by the Kennett government. I have been informed by authoritative sources that the picket line was a Trades Hall Council-endorsed picket line. It was removed, *following a **commitment that no girl from Richmond would be excluded from attending Melbourne Girls' College.***

Not only have there been questionable 'tweaks' to the Melbourne Girls' College enrolment zone over the past 22 years, it seems that further meddling with the enrolment zone is occurring now.

The timing of the proposed changes is disappointing, opportunistic, and has created a lot of discontent and angst within the Richmond community.

Options and Solutions

Despite the current disappointment and deflation within the Richmond community, there are several options to address this, as outlined below. Now is the time to act and resolve this.

- 1. Leave the Melbourne Girls' College enrolment zone in its current form, without change, as less than 50% of places are currently taken up by girls or in-zone siblings.**

The most notable example where a co-educational and single gender secondary school can co-exist with significant enrolment zone overlap, is in the case of Canterbury Girls' Secondary College and Camberwell High School.

Given neither the Richmond nor Prahran High Schools have been constructed, it would be prudent to wait and see how enrolment patterns eventuate before jumping to conclusions, based on data that has not been made publicly available.

This option would maintain community confidence and trust in the enrolment process, and allow for a transitional enrolment policy if required in the future.

- 2. Amend the Melbourne Girls' College enrolment priority order to articulate and specify that girls residing in the 3121 postcode area are considered to be in the highest priority (i.e. #1) enrolment zone.**

This amendment would reduce anxiety amongst Richmond families who have planned to send their girls to Melbourne Girls' College for many years.

- 3. Defer the proposed 2020 changes to the enrolment policy until 2024.**

Richmond High School Choices

This option is also a prudent option, as it allows time for the construction of the new co-educational secondary schools in Richmond and Prahran, and also allows sufficient transition time for girls and parents of girls who are currently residents of 3121 and enrolled in Primary Schools in the 3121 postcode area.

As you are aware, I have been willing to offer my time to assist the Department of Education and Training, in any way possible, to improve educational opportunities for children living in Richmond.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the next steps in resolving the Melbourne Girls' College enrolment policy with you as a matter of urgency.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Justin Naylor
Richmond High School Choices

cc: Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Premier of Victoria
Hon James Merlino MP, Minister for Education
Hon Richard Wynne MP, Minister for Planning, State Member for Richmond
Karen Money, Principal, Melbourne Girls' College
Colin Simpson, Principal, Richmond High School