Parliamentary Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education

This submission is written on behalf of the City of Stonnington – Youth Services

Council - Youth Services would like to make comments on the following:

b) influences of school retention rates, including enrolments and completions for VCE, VCAL and VET on schools in participation in higher education.

The City of Stonnington recognises that the longer students stay at school, the better the chances they have for accessing higher education.

Background
There are twelve independent schools and one selective entrance school within Stonnington. Over the past 20 years, Stonnington has experienced closures of four State Government schools in the municipality and surrounds. This has included Prahran High, Prahran Tech, Chadstone and recently Albert Park College (in Port Phillip) at the end of 2006.

The closure of state schools in the area has influenced the retention rates of Stonnington students who cannot access alternative education options. Many students who need to access State schools are from nearby public housing; from families in entrenched generational poverty, or are recent migrants who need multiple welfare and educational support needs. Already vulnerable students will have to travel significant distances to go to a state school. The closest non-selective schools are Glen Eira Secondary College, Hawthorn Secondary College, Elwood College and Ashwood Secondary College.

The closure of state schools has also meant that Stonnington middle class income earners who would prefer State Education options rather than the Independent or Catholic education options do not have the same choices as in other suburbs. Cost and travel associated with sending child further away to school significant. The City of Stonnington Youth Services regularly receives requests for information from Parents of Primary school aged children regarding State secondary education options. Parents have often articulated frustration and concern that these options are limited.

Influence on participation in school and higher education
Within the City of Stonnington, the lack of access to state education has impacted on the local community in the following ways:

- School attendance – more barriers to attend school, including greater distance to travel and associated costs for schoolbooks, travel and uniform.
- Increase on community agencies to work with disengaged young people.
- Increase demand on community school options such as Lynall Hall and Caulfield Park Community College and pathway support. Currently there are 40 students enrolled at the St Kilda Youth Services VCAL program for 2008.
- Higher numbers of student populations surrounding state schools. These schools are not always equipped to manage student wellbeing issues. Also, when class numbers are already full, students needing to attend state schools must travel further. For instance, students

This inquiry presents an opportunity for State government to investigate options to tailor programs to meet the education needs of the local demographic. The City of
Stonnington considers that State government must maintain high education standards within State Schools in order to provide public local schools the resources and autonomy to compete with independent schools.

c) influences of participation in other post–school pathways, including TAFE enrolments and take-up of apprenticeships or other employment opportunities, on participation in higher education.

The City of Stonnington considers organisations that can provide students with pathways support has a positive influence on their participation in higher education. Local initiatives in the Stonnington area include:

First Stop Prahran Swinburne
- First Stop is a free service that helps young people make decisions about further education, training and employment options. Staff at First Stop can provide personalised assistance to young people (or their parents), or mature age workers interested in beginning an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Ardoch / First Stop/ LLEN partnership - Headstart
- Head Start is A FREE week long intensive pathway planning program for Young People disengaging or disengaged from school, looking for education, training and employment options for 2008.

St Kilda Youth Services Duke St Hub Community VCAL
- VCAL is offered in community setting for young people who find mainstream school settings unsuitable to their learning styles.

In 2001, there were 10,166 children aged between 5 and 17 years living in Stonnington.

The suburbs with the lowest SEIFA index scores (i.e. the areas of highest disadvantage in the City of Stonnington), were:

- **Windsor (SEIFA index of: 1,068)**
- **South Yarra (SEIFA index of: 1,070)**
- Prahran (SEIFA index of: 1,082)
- Malvern East (SEIFA index of: 1,117)
- Armadale (SEIFA index of: 1,119)

While the City of Stonnington had a relatively lower unemployment rate, it is important to note that this varied across the City. Unemployment ranged from a low of 3.8% in Toorak-Kooyong to a high of 6.3% in South Yarra. The five suburbs with the highest rates were:

- **South Yarra (6.3%)**
- Windsor (5.6%)
- Prahran (5.5%)
- Glen Iris (5.3%)
- Malvern East (4.6%)
• The suburb of South Yarra not only had the highest proportion but also the largest number of unemployed persons.