

# Schools not cool over pool

OAKLEIGH MONASH LEADER

Hanna Mills 18 JULY 2006

SWIMMING schedules for hundreds of school children have been thrown into disarray by the Oakleigh pool closure.

Several local primary and secondary schools will be forced to move swimming carnivals and other events because of the Monash Council decision not to reopen the pool this summer.

Community Life Action Group vice-president Julie Clearwater said students who used the pool would suffer as a result of "closed minds" at Monash Council.

"I've spoken to some schoolgirls who were really upset over it," Ms Clearwater said.

Salesian College, Sacred Heart Girls' College and Ashwood College expressed their disappointment last week that Oakleigh pool would no longer be an option for their annual swimming carnivals.

But Monash councillors continued to defend the decision, saying the extra time and money spent travelling to Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre (MARC) would benefit all students.

"It is a facility that schools prefer to attend," Cr Craig Shiell said.

Salesian College principal Father John Prest said Oakleigh pool was in walking distance of the school and the only 50m pool in the area.

Cr Denise McGill said there were 23 school bookings last summer.

But she said schools had trouble coping with the poor condition of changeroom facilities.

Sacred Heart Girls' College deputy principal Paul Thorne said the pool was looking "a bit tired" but the proximity to the school and Oakleigh railway station made it an attractive option.

Ashwood College assistant principal Kerrie Croft said it was "a terrible waste" and the school would no longer have a local pool. "We will be affected in terms of time and money," she said.

But Ms Croft said the school had already been forced to start looking elsewhere because Oakleigh pool had no appropriate shelter.

Cr Shiell said MARC's heated outdoor pool included shaded areas and was preferred by many schools.

Fellow Mulgrave Ward councillor Charlotte Baines said that in her experience "good swimming carnivals were determined by the character of the people, not the closeness of the pool".

# Residents say Games fish is money wasted

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RESIDENTS say they are not being consulted about Monash Council decisions, their money is being spent on wasteful projects and the rate rise is too high, a recent lobby group meeting heard.

Attendees at the Monash Ratepayers Association general meeting, held at the South Oakleigh Bowling Club on July 5, discussed topics including the contentious decision to close Oakleigh swimming pool, inappropriate overdevelopment in Wheelers Hill and the 8.95 per cent rate rise.

The council's decision to use \$50,000 of ratepayers' money to relocate a Commonwealth Games fish to the Monash Aquatic and Recreation Centre was trumpeted as a waste of precious resources.

And as reported in the *Leader* on July 4, a perceived lack of community consultation regarding the shutting of the Oakleigh swimming pool, on the grounds of cost and public safety, still riles some.

About 25 people attended the meeting that included presentations by Oakleigh Ward councillors Stephen Dimopoulos and Denise McGill.

# MP served us well

IN REPLY to Mathew Knight of Malvern East's letter "Cracks in the system" (*Waverley Leader*, June 20).

Had he done his homework he would have known that Burwood state Labor MP Bob Stensholt has pushed to upgrade and replace many of the public housing facilities in the Ashwood area.

The recent injection of funds into the Markham Estate and the demolition of the Victory Boulevard flats and subsequent building of units for older residents are examples.

He has worked with local agencies and residents alike in addressing the problem of upgrading these public housing facilities.

Perhaps Mr Knight should look to the Federal Government's involvement or non-involvement in this area.

We have lived in this area for many years and are obviously more aware of this situation than Mr Knight.

**Marle Appleby and  
Liz Hughes, Chadstone.**

## Very poor performance

DEPUTY Mayor Paul Klisaris recently boasted about Monash Council's high pass mark on the 2006 Community Satisfaction Survey.

Was the satisfaction survey conducted prior to the closure of the Oakleigh Pool and the exorbitant rate increase?

Residents elected councillors believing they would listen to residents' concerns and take action to keep rate increases low, improve facilities and protect Monash from inappropriate development.

It is still early days, but I disagree with Cr Klisaris' assessment and be-

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lieve the new council is not performing well.

My assessment of council performance to date using a rating scale of A-E (rating A representing excellent performance and rating E representing very poor performance) against these three key areas is:

■ **Rates:** The new council has failed to keep rate increases low, recently announcing an exorbitant average rate increase of almost 9 per cent. This increase is three times greater than CPI, the highest percentage increase in Monash in 10 years and the second highest percentage increase across Melbourne in 2006/07. Rating E

■ **Facilities:** The council has reduced the level of facilities to a significant section of Monash through the Oakleigh pool closure. Rating D

■ **Protection against inappropriate development:** Monash Council has failed to protect the Peak site, has failed to complete the Wheelers Hill structure plan and failed to commence the struc-

ture plan for Brandon Park. Rating E. For the sake of residents right across Monash, I sincerely hope that the council's performance significantly improves in the not too distant future.

**David Dickens,  
Wheelers Hill.**

## Rate burden light

PEOPLE have been highly critical of Monash Council for the 8.95 per cent rate increase for 2006/07.

However, this does not give a full picture of the rate burden to be borne by ratepayers compared with other Melbourne councils.

The median rates payable for Monash will be \$862.

Compare that with Boroondara \$1313, Greater Dandenong \$1235, Darebin \$1048 and Hume \$1208, and our rate burden is light.

The only metropolitan median rate that is lower is in Whitehorse at \$859 and all others are substantially higher than Monash.

Furthermore, the median rate increase of \$71 in Monash is around the average.

I suspect many councillors have been elected in the past on a platform of keeping rates low so that in recent years, the rate has had to be increased to make up for past consequent underspending, particularly in capital works.

As a recent correspondent stated, low rates are not good in themselves. They need to be set so that we enjoy adequate services that the council provides.

**Allan Clausen,  
Ashwood.**