

OLC Re-imagining

Beginnings.



1956- Auspicious Olympics origins.

Olympic Village repurposed to address serious housing shortage.

1973- Heidelberg City Council Social Worker, Mary Morgan conducted action research and needs analysis of the West Heidelberg community to support the Henderson Poverty Inquiry.

1974- Heidelberg Mayor Jean Baker called a public meeting to respond to findings on generational disadvantage.

"Certainly it was a fierce place to visit. There were gangs everywhere, lots of fights, brawls". Robin Grow social historian

Turning the tide

1975- Henderson Poverty Enquiry identified Heidelberg West as a "district of special need".

"Everything possible should be done to give every family the opportunity to achieve competence, participate in decisions which affect them, and to have a sense of pride and dignity in themselves and their community" Mary Morgan



1975 - West Heidelberg Community Health and Welfare Centre established through local advocacy and collaboration with community.

"There was a feeling that we were going to do it. Change things for the better, give people an opportunity to do what they wanted to do. Make people of West Heidelberg feel they were entitled to what everyone else was entitled to" Bill Newton

Building momentum

"I found a generosity in this community that I don't think people give this community credit for- generous with outsiders and generous with each other" Bernie Geary

1982- Neighbourhood House started to provide a meeting place and voluntary occasional child care

1986- Community health centre morphed into the Diamond Valley Health Service

1995- New entity for community health established- Banyule Community Health

1997- Olympic Adult Education starts

2006- State Government initiated the Neighbourhood Renewal Program

2008- Men's Shed established

2013- Neighborhood Renewal Program ceased & 3081 Connect started

2015- Olympic Village Child and Family Centre opened

2019- Olympic Village Primary school rebuilt



"The urban fabric of the Olympic Village bears witness to this compressed moment of national myth-making. It lingers on in a strange half-life, the legacy of race, class colonialism and the social role of the state forming an invisible structure of daily life" Tom Bamforth, The Age 2018

OLC contributes to the social fabric of West Heidelberg



Formerly known as the Try Youth Club, from 1956 to 2021 the facility now known as the Olympic Leisure Centre has contributed generational value to the Heidelberg West community.

Contributing to community outcomes

Through offering opportunities to improve physical fitness, the Olympic Leisure Centre supported the community to experience social connections, inclusive engagement and good physical and mental health through the provision of:

- 25 metre indoor swimming pool, spa and sauna plus a Swim School program
- Cardio equipment, fully equipped gym and boxing area plus personal training and group fitness classes
- Multipurpose court stadium
- Accessible facilities including parking, entry and change room amenities

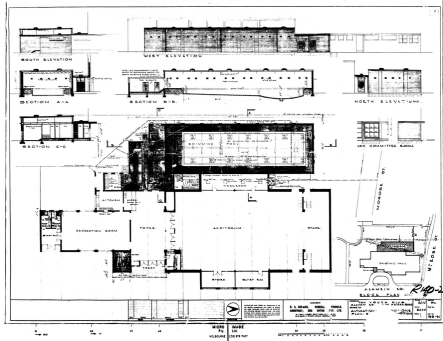
Evolution is built into the DNA of OLC

1956- Olympic athletes facility repurposed as a community hall

1967- Plans submitted install a swimming pool

1991- New set of plans for redevelopment commence development

1996- Morphed into Council managed Olympic Leisure Centre



Rationale for re-imagining 2021

"The OLC is operating well below industry standards. This is driven by inferior quality facilities, a lack of contemporary aquatic leisure facility components, high levels of competition from other aquatic leisure facilities and high levels of social disadvantage. On their own, each of these factors has a detrimental impact on centre performance. When combined, they create the “perfect storm” resulting in incredibly low attendance." EMT Briefing January 2021

"The Olympic Village Leisure Centre pool looks like something that stepped out of a 70s horror movie" Resident 2021

The narrative of Heidelberg West is evolving

"We can't give people proper incomes, we can't give people proper housing but we can certainly work in ways that help people advocate for themselves and help them bring some change in their lives, even if it's the slightest thing" Jim Pasinis 1982

Building on the successful interventions of the past, further investment to tackle the issues, that once seemed insurmountable, is happening.

Olympia Housing Project & Big Housing Build- Realising investment in public housing stock that will increase population and demands for local supports and services.

LaTrobe NEIC Community Infrastructure Plan- Further potential to deliver on recommendations including a large-scale community hub for the neighbourhood house/ OAE, an out-posted YPRL library branch, arts and cultural space, and expansion/ reconfiguration of the Banyule Community Health Service.

Northern Horizons Report 2020- Identified health issues including obesity, mental health concerns can be addressed through the provision of improved sporting facilities and community centres within 20 minute walkable neighbourhoods.

Community Vision 2041- Calls for future proofing community hubs and tackling social isolation.

Plan Melbourne- Calls for "More equitable distribution of social infrastructure"- inequitably distributed tends to disadvantage those on lower incomes and for social sustainability by facilitating access to affordable spaces, delivered through an integrated responses with other service providers.

Heidelberg West - a suburb of contradictions

A suburb of generational poverty.

Despite significant interventions, generational, nationally significant levels of disadvantage continue.

"The essential building blocks of personal development are missing and what they've experienced is abandonment. They have no answer to the question 'who belongs to me?'"
Harry Prout

"I call this place a yin-yang: for every good there's a bad and for every bad there's a good"
Resident 2015



A suburb of optimism and possibilities

"When I came here I was broken, very broken, but now I'm on a leadership team... That's how far I've come with encouragement, care and respect" Resident 2015

"This is a process of regeneration, where there is a great history and there is a great future"
Arthur Rogers DHHS 2015

"The village represents a community of people who are doing it tough together. And like the Olympic athletes who shared their homes, the residents are determined to do their best at it"
The Age 2015

Heidelberg West - a suburb of strength

Even the postcode, which was once so stigmatised locals would change it on their job applications, is now printed on T-shirts reading "I love 3081".



A history of advocacy

In the 1970's the Heidelberg West community rallied for the community health centre and relentlessly advocated to Commonwealth, State MP's and departments.

"The women of West Heidelberg have created a legacy, where women in the community have a strong voice that's heard and called upon." Michael Geary

Late 1979, after a public meeting, the community bombarded the Minister for Education to advocate for maintaining staffing levels at the primary school. The local member met with the delegation "provided we stopped the phone calls".

"What's been achieved here over the years has been terrific. I remember three Ward councillors- Tom Russell, Ron Haining and Harold Weinberg- were great advocates for the place" John Cain

While there are still issues, as a result of Neighbourhood Renewal, residents 'now have a stronger united voice to advocate for all members of our community, and that voice is not only heard, but listened to and acted upon" Rachel Wightman



Respectful re-imagining of OLC

The establishment of the community health service in Olympic Village represents an exemplar of working alongside community to build community.

"It's great to be able to look back, over all those years, and say, yes I remember the start of this and what a great success it has been" David McKenzie

Taking cues from what has worked, the OLC facility will be reimagined for the needs of our Heidelberg West community today, and for long-term benefit.

Because we value this community and it's diversity, and because the community have a proud history of advocating for what they need, the next chapter of the Olympic Leisure Centre will be narrated through co-design with the community.

Because we have strong, willing organisational partners, who know this community and have forged enduring trust-based relationships, we will unlock long-term community value with our partners.