



University of
South Australia

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To whom it may concern

Proposed McDonalds Port Road Woodville

I was very concerned when it was drawn to my attention that McDonalds is proposing to open a new outlet close to the Woodville Primary School. The Woodville Primary School is committed to providing a healthy environment for its children and is participating in the Obesity Physical Activity and Lifestyle (OPAL) Program, an exciting community-base initiative supported by the SA Government and driven by local councils. The major goal of the OPAL program is to prevent obesity in children through healthy diet and lifestyle initiatives. As part of this program the Woodville Primary School has transformed its canteen which now has a strong focus on healthy foods and drinks. The children and the entire school community are the drivers of this program. A McDonalds outlet so close to the school could completely undermine this important initiative.

The more we understand obesity, the more we realise how important it is to prevent it – and that must start early in life. This is why programs such as OPAL are so important. Obesity is a very serious and escalating public health problem in Australia. It is the major driver of the increasing rates of diabetes and linked also to heart disease and a number of major cancers, plus many other chronic conditions. Effective treatment is very difficult – almost all people who lose weight regain it. This is why early intervention for prevention is so important. Diet is a very important part of obesity prevention as is regular physical activity. McDonalds has many products that are energy-dense and nutrient-poor. While in theory people can select healthier options, the biggest sellers are not those healthy options, which are certainly not popular with children.

I am very impressed that the community of Woodville is so supportive of the Woodville Primary School's commitment to providing a healthy food and physical activity environment for their students. The Council is behind them, as are the teachers and the community. It would be a very regressive step for this wonderful community initiative to improve children's health and set them on a healthy life trajectory to be undermined by a fast food outlet such as McDonalds in close proximity to the school. Finally, as a disadvantaged area the residents of Woodville and their children are at higher risk of obesity than are the residents of more affluent suburbs. They are already exposed to more fast food outlets than are those in more affluent areas. It is imperative that health promotion initiatives such as OPAL at the Woodville Primary School are not undermined.

I'd be very happy to discuss this with you in more detail.

Yours sincerely

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