

Shock school zone changes in Frankston stun parents who just bought in

By [Jewel Topsfield](#)

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In October last year, Cathy Leeves' family moved into a house they had built in the highly sought-after Frankston High School enrolment zone.

It wasn't cheap – buying into Melbourne's top public school zones comes at a premium.

The median price of properties with more than two bedrooms in the Beaumaris Secondary College zone was a whopping \$425,000 more last year than those bordering the zone, according to research by the Real Estate Institute of Victoria.

Buying into the zone for Frankston High – one of the top-performing government schools in Melbourne's south – added \$74,400 to the median price tag last year.



Sienna Leeves, who is grade 5, was looking forward to going to Frankston High with her friends. SIMON SCHLUTER

But Ms Leeves' daughter, Sienna, was nearing secondary school age and she was impressed by the VCE results and facilities at Frankston High: “The reputation of this school is amazing.”

A month ago, Ms Leeves heard on the grapevine the school zone was changing in 2021.

In disbelief, she plugged their address into the [Findmyschool website](#), which the Victorian government launched last year to enable parents to see which zone they are in.

In 2020, their address was in the Frankston High zone. But in 2021 it was not. “Our next-door neighbours are in and we are not,” Ms Leeves said.

The family was left reeling.

“I really, really wanted to go to [Frankston] High School with all my friends,” Sienna said.

“Everyone has been blindsided by this,” her mother added. “There was no public consultation – I know families who have bought within the last few months thinking they are still in the zone.”

Nick D’Assisi, who moved from Dandenong North so his children could attend Frankston High, was also shocked to discover he was no longer in the zone.



Nick and Kate D’Assisi moved from Dandenong North so their children could attend Frankston High. SIMON SCHLUTER

“Me and my wife are devastated,” he said. “We specifically came to this area to buy a house to be in the zone. When I was looking, I saw houses I liked better than the one I bought, but they were not in the zone.”

The Education Department said 35 school zones were changed for the 2021 school year but refused to name the affected schools.

“School zones are reviewed annually to take into account new schools, changing provision at existing schools or changing demand and demographics of the local population,” a spokesperson said.

The department said that since 2015, Frankston High School had a “non-standard” school zone resulting in some areas being excluded from guaranteed access to their nearest government school.

(The department refused to clarify what a “non-standard” school zone was or why Frankston High had one for the past five years.)

It said Frankston High’s zone had been “standardised” for enrolments in the 2021 school year to ensure students had guaranteed access to the school nearest to where they lived.

Melbourne school zones boosting house prices

Median prices are for properties with more than two bedrooms for 12 months to December 2019

Government secondary schools	Median house price in school zone	Bordering school zone (1km)	Difference
Beaumaris Secondary College	\$1,600,000	\$1,175,000	\$425,000
Glen Waverley Secondary College	\$1,615,000	\$1,235,000	\$380,000
Balwyn High School	\$1,920,000	\$1,598,000	\$322,000
Camberwell High School	\$2,125,000	\$1,960,000	\$165,000
McKinnon Secondary College	\$1,450,000	\$1,310,000	\$140,000
Box Hill High School	\$1,292,500	\$1,180,000	\$112,500
Mount Waverley Secondary College	\$1,235,000	\$1,151,500	\$83,500
Frankston High School	\$734,400	\$660,000	\$74,400
Prahran High School	\$1,580,000	\$1,520,000	\$60,000
University High School	\$1,300,500	\$1,250,000	\$50,500

“Every child has the right to enrol at their closest government school or at another school of their choice, provided that school has sufficient space to accommodate them,” a spokesperson said.

But Ms Leeves worries there will be no room for those who live outside the zone.

Frankston High’s student population has increased over the past few years: there were 1889 students enrolled last year, up 8 per cent from 1743 in 2014.

A [Facebook page](#) set up to “take action” against the rezoning has already accrued 250 members.

Liberal member for the south-eastern metropolitan region, Gordon Rich-Phillips, said he had received many emails from distressed parents who now found themselves outside the zone and were being “stonewalled” by the Education Department.

“Releasing this new map without telling anyone is causing a great deal of upset and chaos. What’s needed here is for the department to be very transparent,” he said.

Real Estate Institute of Victoria president Leah Calnan said the impact of popular public schools on property prices was a phenomenon that was especially pronounced in Melbourne.

She said properties in the zones for Glen Waverley Secondary College, Balwyn High School, McKinnon Secondary College and Mount Waverley Secondary College also sold at a substantial premium.

“It’s been like that for many years,” Ms Calnan said.

“Parents weigh up the decision of paying for private schools – which cost an average of \$25,000 a year per child – or buying within a good school zone and having an asset that will continue to accrue in value.”

Dr Emma Rowe, a senior lecturer in education at Deakin University, said Australians had a culture of “shopping” for schools.

“We often think of public schools being outside the market, but if parents are buying houses specifically to get into a school zone, they are paying fees in real estate,” Dr Rowe said.

“For me, that highlights there is a blurring between public and private, which points to a much bigger systemic issue about the segregation in our schools.”

Dr Rowe said Australia had one of the most segregated school systems in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with highly concentrated pockets of advantaged and disadvantaged students.

“There is a strong relationship between disadvantage and poor educational outcomes,” she said.

Dr Rowe said schools in countries such as Finland – which performs well in international standardised testing and has high levels of equality – were all very similar.

“No matter what school you go to in Finland you have similar teachers, curriculum and resources.”

Meanwhile, Ms Leeves said her family's future was up in the air. “We don't know whether we will move again,” she said. “We can potentially put in an out-of-zone enrolment application but we are not guaranteed. We are just trying to get answers.”