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Submission: The Girls & Boys Brigade a public benevolent institution established since 1882 has been in a formal partnership/Lease with the City of Sydney Council since 1972. This partnership provides direct services from the Brigade owned Riley Street building to disadvantaged school aged children who primarily live in social and community housing in Surry Hills, Redfern and Waterloo.

The free “exception” services provided by Council’s After School Surry Hills Children’s Program and the Brigade’s Vacation Care Program means that families who cannot afford fee paying services are not financially or socially disadvantaged. Additionally the Brigade provides the Surry Hills Youth Services for young people aged 12-18 which is vital to keeping youth connected to services and community.

The Girls & Boys Brigade is opposed to the changing of the City of Sydney boundary to create a “mega-council”. The city of Sydney is a thriving and diverse worldwide recognised city and it needs to be able to continue to develop and respond to the immediate and long term needs of the community. The risks of such a proposal failing far outweigh the benefits.

The Council has always been proactive in looking to the future particularly with the Sustainable Sydney 2030 plan, they are prepared to meet the needs of the changing living, working and business community and the expectations these groups place on them. Throughout our partnership with the Council the Brigade has been particularly encouraged by the understanding that Council has for marginalized groups in the community and the specific needs they have in regards to services, housing and community activities to instill the sense of belonging.

With an extended boundary free services specifically targeting marginalised families may be lost in the need to streamline service provision across a larger local government area. This would be so detrimental to the support that Council and local agencies have provided to the really high needs families that have been identified as living in social housing. The enrolment profile of our enrolments confirms the high needs within the community with 100% living on or below the poverty line, 72% living in social housing and 72% of the children living in one parent families.

Increasing the Council boundary risks stretching financial and operational resources too far which can then mean that efficiency is lost in both areas.

The Brigade has also been recipients from Council’s Community Grants Program which have been beneficial in assisting us provide our services; the proposed changes may negatively impact on the ability of community organisations to obtain the grants they require to serve the community.

We submit this above information as part of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal review and trust this will be taken into consideration.