

Deakin's pay-to-park farce



A sold-out footy match? No, it is the free parking around the oval at Deakin, Warrnambool, where students would rather park and walk to avoid a \$6 a day fee. It is only open in dry weather.

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[dropcap]egional universities are vital to the small communities they serve, in terms of providing quality education, but especially for the continued economic development of those regions.

They educate *local* people, mostly young people (and in so doing help keep them in the towns they know) and provide many jobs.

Students have to work hard (there is a huge drop off rate in the first year) and most try to balance study with part-time paid work, often difficult to secure in regional areas. Indeed, trying to encourage young people to stay and study in Warrnambool was a key topic in the recent election for Wannon.

Most students struggle financially during this time, so it seems unbelievable that a regional university would choose to make going to university any harder.

Deakin University's Warrnambool campus, despite being on the outskirts of town, charges students the same fee to park their cars (\$6 a day or by the hour rates) as students at its Melbourne and Geelong-based campuses. To make matters worse, it provides a solitary ticket machine at the Warrnambool campus which leads to long snaking queues of cars (backing up to the railway station 500m away) at peak times.

[box] There is little argument in city campuses charging for parking, as there is limited space and the public transport system is usually close at hand: there are viable and cheap options for students who do not want to pay.[/box]



Could this be South-West Victoria's hardest working parking ticket machine?

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[/dropcap]he Warrnambool campus offers free parking of a sort (when it is not raining)! It allows students and staff to park

for free around the edge of its football field. It is currently closed because of wet grounds, causing another spike of complaints and a return to long lineups for the single ticket machine.

You might ask, why don't students just use the train service? After all, it is cheaper and better for the environment.

The \$1.15m train station, built in 2006, is only useful if you want to turn up to the campus at 5.35am or 5.20pm (from west to east). Practically useless. A bus service is scheduled to arrive at the campus from its W'bool rounds at 8.45am, but our contacts say it is often late and therefore students are reluctant to take the risk.

[box] It's important to know that not all regional universities charge their students for the 'privilege' of parking a car to attend lectures or study.[/box]

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[dropcap]onash University in Gippsland, where I recently worked, did not charge students a cent to park at its regional campus in Churchill, despite there also being a bus service to the campus. Staff and students at that regional campus were provided with free and plentiful parking.

Parking has been an ongoing issue at the Deakin campus for two years. There have been protests since 2011 about the university's money grab.

In 2011 the Vice Chancellor Professor Jane den Hollander said in an email to staff that she knew the pay to park arrangements would "upset some students and staff but subsidising car parks was costing the university's core business".

"I trust that you will take some time to consider these new arrangements in the light of the need to reduce Deakin's carbon footprint, to release more funds for Deakin's teaching

and research activities, and to keep pace with other institutions who are also working hard to reduce the demand for on-site car parking,” she wrote.

[box] She said the changes also aimed to reduce demand for parking on campuses and encourage staff and students to adopt “sustainable transport alternatives” like public transport.[/box]

Clearly, that position has not changed, even though the VC would now know of the poor public transport options for the Warrnambool campus. We are not the first to call for the university to act and support its regional staff and students, and do away with its pay-to-park farce.