

Advertisement

NATIONAL VICTORIA EDUCATION

The multi-million dollar arms race to lure students to university

By Henrietta Cook
1 June 2018 – 2:32pm

How are students today going to remember their university years if they were never there?

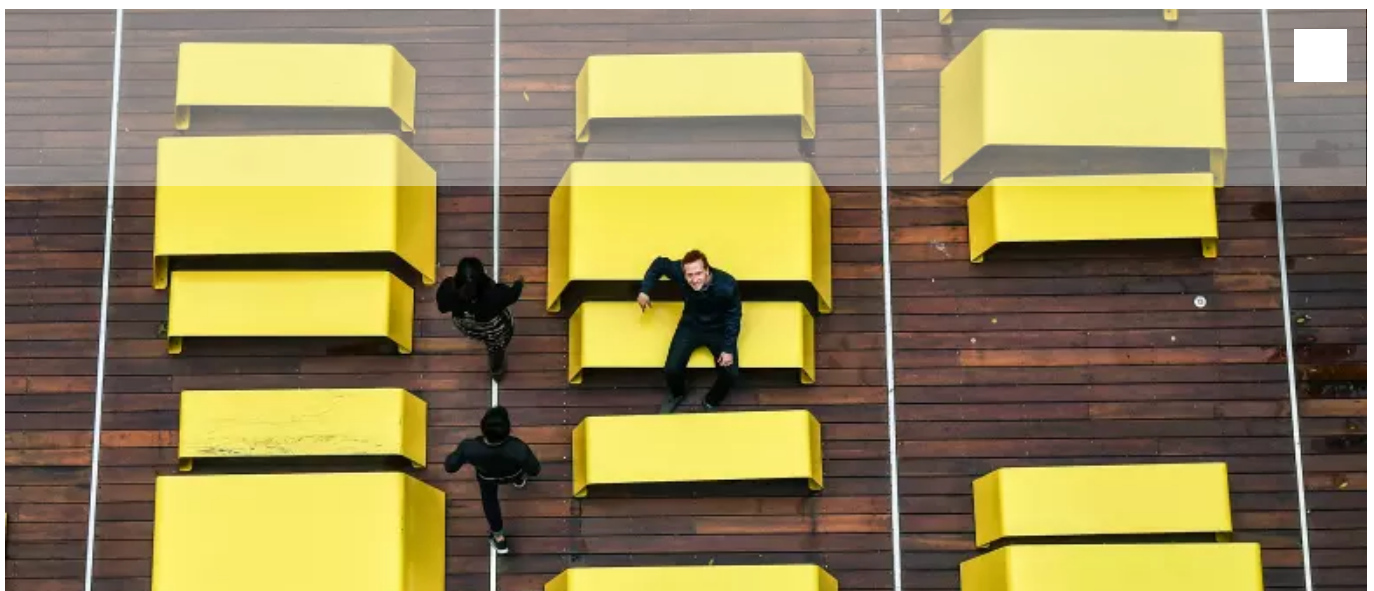


In a bid to lure students to campus and keep them there - rather than studying from home - institutions are locked in a multi-million dollar facilities arms race.

2 [View all comments](#)

RMIT recently spent \$220 million on its New Academic Street, which has transformed tired 1960s buildings into laneways, garden terraces and sprawling study spaces.

Just up the road, the University of Melbourne will soon start building a \$200 million student precinct with 24/7 co-working spaces, an amphitheatre and retail, food and beverage outlets.





First-year RMIT student Adam Corrie said he loves all the new study spaces at his university

Photo: Joe Armao

Advertisement

As universities face increasing competition and demand for online education grows, bricks and mortar institutions are spruiking their campus experience as a key point of difference.

Architect Carey Lyon, the founding director of Lyons, the firm that oversaw the RMIT revamp, said "sticky campuses" created a community where students wanted to study and socialise.

"People realise that human to human connection that you get from being on campus is a really important part of an education," he said.

According to Mr Lyon, RMIT's campus operates as a living room for many students.

"A lot of their students live in very small apartments within a short walk of RMIT...the university gives them space to work during the day and night," he said.

There's no reason for students to leave campus for meals – a spacious dining area with city views and microwaves let students prepare lunch, and eateries and coffee shops are scattered throughout the buildings. Students are even allowed to eat in the refurbished library.

"More than 20 years ago you used to have the university cafeteria," Mr Lyon said. "Then 10 years ago it was the food court and now universities are saying how can we get the best retailers, the best coffee shops and the best food providers so we are really offering students something that makes them want to stay on the campus."

More than 4000 seats - a mix of traditional benches, bean bags and deck chairs - are available indoors and out and can be rearranged to let students work in small groups or solo. There are quiet spaces and areas for more heated discussions.

Giant chess boards, dance machines and a basketball court keep students engaged in between classes.

First-year chemical engineering and applied science student Adam Corrie arrives at campus at around 8.30am and doesn't leave until about 6pm. The 21-year-old prefers to

study on campus, because there are fewer distractions.

One of his favourite features of the refurbishment is the drop-in support area, where a teacher is on call to help students with hairy questions.

“I often have maths questions,” he said.

University of Melbourne Provost Mark Considine said his institution had overhauled the way it built academic buildings.

“Student life is the central organising space,” he said. “These are important places for students to study, congregate and to feel attached. The effect is they get a more holistic experience. They are not just coming to great classes and going home again.”

Students have been demanding this change, Professor Considine said.

“The feedback from students has been quite clear; they love what happens in class but want more from the whole experience that include sport, philanthropy and meeting other students. They want to have the entire experience.”



[License this article](#)

[EDUCATION](#)



Henrietta Cook



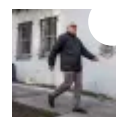
Education Editor at The Age

MOST VIEWED IN NATIONAL

1 **War veteran assaulted by police at Knox station**



2 **'You've got to huff and puff': Study finds walking faster means living longer**



3 **Seven years for man who raped at hospital hours after being bailed**



4 **Rapper Riff Raff's Australian tour cancelled after rape allegation**



5 **BREAKING**

Thor's hammer found at Melbourne airport, man goes to cops in Perth

