

Local unis drop ranking

“An extra \$1 billion a year is desperately needed”

Australia's tertiary institutions have lost their standing on a list ranking the top 200 world universities.

Published in the London based *Times Higher Education* magazine, the list showed that, despite dropping overall since last year, nine of Australia's 38 universities made it into the top 200.

In Victoria, Melbourne fell

from 27th place last year to 38, Monash dropped from 43 to 47, and RMIT was nowhere to be found.

Interstate universities suffered a similar fate with Sydney University dropping from 27 to 28, New South Wales University from 64 to 83, Queensland University went from 33 to 43, Western Australia University dropped from 64 to 83, Adelaide fell from 62 to 106 and Macquarie went from 168 to 182.

The only Australian tertiary institution to maintain the same place as last year is ANU, unchanged at 16.

Monash vice-chancellor Richard Larkins said these rankings were “notoriously volatile”.

“The movement of a few places is hard to interpret,” he said.

“Monash remains the youngest university amongst those ranked in the top 50 and considering the age, prestige and quality of many universities ranked below it, Monash is proud of the ranking.”

RMIT vice-chancellor Margaret Gardner, said RMIT has launched four research institutes as centres of research excellence and (was) confident their outcomes will strengthen the university's standing in coming years.”

While universities attempt to improve their standing with more research and better facilities, chief executive of Universities Australia Dr Glen Withers said the problem really comes down to

funding.

“Public funding has been run down over the past decade and an extra \$1 billion a year over five years is desperately needed to maintain our high quality university system.”

Melbourne vice-chancellor Glyn Davis said Australian universities “continue to punch above their weight in these volatile rankings where the universities at the top of the list enjoy significantly better funding than Australian universities. “This goes to show just how critical good funding is to the success of our universities and why it is vital that the current review of higher education in Australia seriously addresses this issue.”

Sarah Elfman

Services dire funding need

The national student union has called for immediate action on funding by the Federal Government to prevent financially crippled student services on campuses from collapsing.

National Union of Students Victorian president Sarah Cole, says compulsory fees should be reintroduced for next year, though at a lower cost for students than the previous level of \$500.

The Union is also calling for the creation of Campus Community Facility Funds with government and university money being contributed to reduce the amount required in student fees.

Cole says the Federal Government must act immediately with an assistance package or many campuses won't be able to alter their enrolment systems in time for next year.

She says that even with immediate action it may be too late for some campuses as student services are disappearing every month and the way things are going “universities will end up being dull boring places and just degree spending machines.”

Many services that previously relied on funding are already suffering. On some campuses there are now less counselling services and higher waiting lists. Students now often have to pay for legal advice, which means such services are “less open to anyone that walks in.”

Cole says important advocacy services, which should be mandatory, have been cut.

She says deferral of any student fee should be allowed, or combining it with already existing HECS debt.

Cole says considerable assistance needs to come from the Government to “repair the damage done over the past few years”.

Sarah Elfman

Staying connected

An Australian first, Monash students travelling on some regular intercampus bus services are staying connected to the internet, emails and their education thanks to a new partnership between the university and Vodafone.

Bus services that transfer up to 60,000 Monash students a year between the Clayton, Berwick and Peninsula campuses in Melbourne have been fitted with new in-vehicle broadband internet access.

Vodafone delivers internet services to student passengers by creating a free mobile onboard wi-fi hot spot via Vodafone's 3G HSDPA network.

Pictured: Monash Berwick students Katherine Hoogenboom, Nick McLennan and Tammie Van Exan.



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