



Eden Foster MP

STATE MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Dear Minister Ward,

I write today on behalf of graduate students living in my electorate of Mulgrave, represented by the Monash Graduate Association (MGA). Specifically, I write in support of their advocacy to reform public transport concessions so that higher-degree research and postgraduate students in Victoria receive the same rights and cost-of-living relief as their undergraduate peers.

I was once a postgraduate student myself, working towards a higher degree. That experience enhanced my skills, strengthened my financial independence, and ultimately led to my becoming an elected Member of Parliament, representing the community in which I was raised.

Reflecting on that journey, I am sure you will agree that the government should encourage others to pursue similarly rewarding pathways, particularly by addressing systemic barriers such as cost-of-living pressures, financial insecurity and transport accessibility.

Helping students get to and from campus is a practical and proven way of addressing these challenges. Access to education can be transformative, allowing Australians from all backgrounds to pursue opportunities that might otherwise remain out of reach.

It is clear that existing student public transport concessions, alongside initiatives such as the April–May Free PTV program, have provided meaningful support to Victorians doing it tough amid global economic pressures.

Given the success of these initiatives, as well as the existing undergraduate concession scheme, I believe it is both sensible and equitable to consider the MGA's proposal to extend the current concession scheme to postgraduate students.

Victoria is currently the only state in Australia that does not offer public transport concessions or discounted fares to full-time graduate students. While I recognise that students experiencing financial hardship can apply for a Low Income Health Care Card (HCC), eligibility is assessed on household income. This means many students living on a low personal income are unable to access the support they need.

With the median income for Monash graduate students - across both coursework and research degrees - sitting between \$20,000 and \$39,000, the financial pressure facing this cohort is clear. For many, the cost of simply getting to university represents a significant and unnecessary barrier to their education.





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I therefore encourage you to give serious consideration to the MGA's proposal and extend public transport concessions to full-time postgraduate students. Doing so would bring Victoria in line with the rest of the country, provide meaningful cost-of-living relief to thousands of students, and ensure that our transport system supports - rather than inhibits - Victorians pursuing higher education.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further, and thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Eden Foster MP

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