Keeping it local: geographic patterns of university attendance

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The university attendance habits of Australians, in a geographic sense, are different from those in the United States, the United Kingdom and many other western countries. Australian university students are less likely to move between major cities to study. This paper finds that in addition to this, within a large metropolitan area, university campuses attract a substantial share of the university-attending population who completed their schooling nearby. Essentially, Australian university students like to 'keep it local'. The findings discussed here also illustrate that the location of academically accessible university campuses in outer suburban areas can help to improve opportunities for university entrance. This paper highlights the need for universities to develop networks with schools in their local areas in order to ensure that course provision is tailored to the needs of local communities and also to educate local students about the opportunities that a university education can provide.

Introduction

Many social and economic characteristics of individuals are now measured by the proxy of postcode (Burrows & Gane, 2006). A person's 'location' is used to make inferences about health, income and educational wellbeing, and indices of socioeconomic status are concocted at every level of aggregation – from street to continent. The use of geodemographics has become an increasingly important tool for marketing firms, but is also of crucial importance to social scientists and others interested in understanding the dynamics of contemporary society. Therefore, for universities, as large institutions with an important role in facilitating educational and social mobility, it is a worthwhile exercise to monitor the links between residential location and attendance at particular universities.

In this paper, university attendance patterns of Melbourne government school Year 12 completers in 2004 are presented. The paper examines the link between location of school and location of university attended among this cohort. In doing so, this analysis focuses not on overall university participation rates of Year 12 government school completers, but instead on the attendance patterns of those students who were accepted and enrolled in a university course in the year following school completion. The analysis shows that there are strong spatial patterns in university attendance within the suburban landscape of Melbourne. In all major areas of the city in which there are university campuses, the data show that individual university campuses attract a substantial share of the university-attending government school population who completed their schooling nearby.

Background

University attendance patterns in Australia are starkly different from those in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. There is a strong emphasis in these other countries on leaving home to attend university and live at 'college', but in Australia, while a residential college system exists, there is substantially less intra-country movement of students to attend university; students (in particular metropolitan dwellers) are more likely to attend university in their home city. One key reason for this is that the Australian university sector is more homogenous than those in the UK and US. As such, each state capital in Australia contains universities and campuses which offer a full range of courses, therefore meaning that there is less need for students to travel widely in pursuit of specific courses.

University attendance in Australia is closely linked to residential location. A number of studies into access and equity in Australian higher education have touched on the issue of residential proximity to universities as a determinant of aspiration and attendance (Dobson & Rapson, 2003; Harvey-Beavis & Elsworth, 1998; James, 2002; James, Baldwin, & McInnis, 1999; James, Wyn et al., 1999; Stevenson, Evans, Maclachlan, Karmel, & Blakers, 2000). Two of these studies in particular have shown that among students who have the ambition and aptitude for university, residential location and proximity to university campuses do have an influence on choice of university, but that the impact of this factor overall is relatively small, especially when compared with preferences by field of study (Harvey-Beavis & Elsworth, 1998; James et al., 1999). These findings are important and have helped to inform policy in the area of higher education provision.

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In contrast with previous studies, this paper does not focus on aspirations and ambition for university, but instead it concentrates on the members of the cohort of government school Year 12 completers once they have gained access to university.

Research examining geographic patterns of university attendance in Australia has generally been limited to regional versus metropolitan comparisons. The reason for this is that these studies have, quite rightly, had as their focus, broader issues of equity. This paper considers the equity issues raised in previous research, but focuses more specifically on examining the attendance dynamics at a spatial level across metropolitan Melbourne. This is essentially an additional (but certainly not mutually exclusive) dynamic of the access and equity debate in Australian higher education.

This paper examines the pattern of attendance among the government school Year 12 completers in Melbourne in 2004 who enrolled at a Victorian university in 2005. The location of the student's school has been used as a proxy for their residential location. Therefore, the discussion relies on the assumption that the majority of government school students attend their neighbourhood school. The enrolment policies of the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) (as it was then known), and Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) data both support this assumption. Policy documents from the four metropolitan regions of the department stipulate that most students beginning year 7 in a government school 'will be attending their neighbourhood school' (Department of Education and Training, 2004) and that it is a principle of the DET 'to provide each child with the right to a place in the designated neighbourhood school' (Department of Education and Training, 2006). According to these documents, 'the designated neighbourhood school is defined as the secondary college which is nearest in a straight line distance to the student's permanent residential address' (Department of Education and Training, 2004). The VTAC data confirm the impact of these policy directives. There is a strong correlation (0.79) between the postcode of each government school year 12 completer's permanent residential postcode and the postcode of the school they attend.

While this research focuses on the situation within Melbourne, it is likely that some of the issues explored here are replicated in other capital cities in Australia where there are multiple universities and campuses. Future use of a national collection of state tertiary admission centre data (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008) could

Figure 1: Location and size of the main metropolitan university campuses in Melbourne, 2003
Source: VTAC 2003/04, unpublished

help to explore these issues across Australian capital cities.

There are eight publicly funded universities and numerous university campuses spread across metropolitan Melbourne. Campuses vary in size, types of course provided, the tertiary entrance rank required for their courses and the background of students they enrol. The location and relative size of these campuses is displayed in Figure 1.

As the map shows, a number of campuses are based in the centre of Melbourne, while satellite campuses for various universities exist in the outer suburbs. Of those campuses not located in the city and inner suburbs, Victoria University (VU) is primarily based in the west, La Trobe (Bundoora) is the largest provider in the north, Monash, Deakin and Swinburne have campuses in the east, and Monash is the only university presence in the south east. The finer lines in Map 1 represent the boundaries of the Statistical Subdivisions (SSDs) that divide the metropolitan area and are used in the subsequent tables.

The data used in this analysis relate to the university applications and enrolment information for government school Year 12 completers in 2004 who applied through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre for a university place, were offered a place and enrolled in the university in 2005. For each student, the location of their school (by SSD) has been coded. The enrolment rate of these students in Melbourne's main university campuses has been calculated and the share of students from each area enrolled in each of these campuses is displayed in the tables that follow.

The data in the following tables highlight the strong prevalence among these school completers to enrol at

School location	*City, Inner and Middle Southern and Eastern university campuses (% of all university enrolments among government school applicants)*										
	Deakin Burwood	*Monash Caulfield*	*Monash Clayton*	*Swinburne Hawthorn/ Prahran*	*RMIT City*	*University of Melbourne*	*Other Uni Metro Melb*	*Rest of Victorian Campus*	*Other^*	*University enrolments (%)*	*Total university enrolments*
Inner region											
Inner Melbourne	5.0	3.6	16.6	2.7	9.2	42.5	18.0	2.0	0.4	100	782
Northern and Western regions											
Inner/Middle											
Western Melbourne	3.1	2.5	2.5	4.4	16.0	19.7	44.7	6.7	0.3	100	638
Moreland City	2.2	2.2	2.2	4.3	21.5	15.1	50.5	2.2	0.0	100	93
Northern Middle Melbourne	4.9	1.7	2.7	2.2	17.0	18.7	49.0	3.7	0.0	100	406
Outer											
Melton-Wyndham	0.0	0.8	2.4	1.6	8.0	17.6	44.0	25.6	0.0	100	125
Hume City	2.4	0.0	0.6	4.2	19.4	10.9	55.2	7.3	0.0	100	165
Northern Outer Melbourne	2.6	0.0	1.1	3.0	21.8	12.0	54.9	4.1	0.4	100	266
Eastern and Southern regions											
Inner/Middle											
Boroondara City	11.7	7.8	13.2	8.1	7.0	26.2	23.5	2.3	0.2	100	554
Eastern Middle Melbourne	16.5	5.4	21.2	5.8	6.7	18.3	23.2	2.6	0.2	100	1,248
Southern Melbourne	15.3	7.4	21.7	4.3	10.3	13.8	23.9	3.3	0.0	100	419
Greater Dandenong	14.3	7.4	17.5	4.1	13.4	10.1	31.3	1.8	0.0	100	217
Eastern Outer Melbourne	20.9	2.4	12.1	8.0	7.8	11.0	30.8	6.4	0.5	100	373
Outer											
Yarra Ranges A	20.5	1.3	3.8	7.7	8.3	22.4	28.8	7.1	0.0	100	156
South East Outer	12.2	3.6	13.6	5.0	6.8	9.5	34.4	14.9	0.0	100	221
Frankston City	10.1	5.4	16.9	1.4	12.2	10.1	33.8	10.1	0.0	100	148
Mornington Peninsula	12.5	4.5	9.1	9.1	5.7	11.4	27.3	18.2	2.3	100	88
Total Metro Melb	**10.5**	**4.1**	**12.7**	**4.9**	**10.8**	**20.3**	**31.5**	**5.0**	**0.2**	**100**	**5,899**
Total Year 12 VTAC enrolments	**621**	**242**	**747**	**287**	**638**	**1,195**	**1,861**	**294**	**14**	**5,899**	
Median ENTER for VTAC offer	**79.55**	**84.85**	**91.43**	**81.65**	**79.65**	**94.45**	**84.95***	**68.85**	**87.18**	**82.65**	**82.65**

Table 1: Year 12 government school applicant university enrolments by school SSD for selected campuses located in CBD, inner/middle southern and eastern suburbs, 2005

Source: VTAC unpublished 2004/05

^Interstate or overseas university campuses applied for through VTAC

**median for all Metro Melbourne university campuses*

a university in the same region as the school that they attended. There are three separate tables representing three distinct geographic areas of the city. These tables display the distribution of university enrolees in each of Melbourne's Statistical Subdistricts (SSDs) by university campus. Table 1 highlights attendance rates within those universities located in the inner city, the eastern and the southern suburbs of Melbourne. Table 2 focuses on universities located in the northern and western areas of Melbourne. The final table in this series (Table 3) highlights the university campuses in the outer east and south east of the metropolitan area. In these tables the three areas with the highest proportion of enrolments at the campus are shaded in grey.

While this analysis controls for school sector, by focusing on government school completers, there are of course other inter-related factors influencing university choice and attendance patterns. Such factors include tertiary entrance rankings and socioeconomic status. These factors are explored briefly towards the end of this paper.

Patterns in university attendance

Universities in the centre and to the east of Melbourne

As displayed in Figure 1, a number of campuses are located in the centre of Melbourne. The campuses examined here that are located in the inner area of Melbourne are the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus, and the city campus of RMIT. Table 1 also shows the share of enrolments within a number of campuses located in the eastern suburbs of the city.

In Table 1 the pattern of enrolment by students from the eastern suburbs of the city at local university campuses is strong. The rates of attendance across the metropolitan SSDs of Melbourne at the two major campuses located in the east – Deakin Burwood and Monash Clayton – are largest among those who attended school in the eastern and southern suburbs and are considerably lower among those from the northern and western areas of Melbourne. For example, in the SSD of Eastern Middle Melbourne, where Monash Clayton is located, 21.2 per cent of government school leavers who enrolled in a university course were attending the Monash Clayton campus. By comparison, Monash Clayton's share of all Melbourne university attendees was much smaller (12.7 per cent). Of further interest is the fact that the proportion of university enrolled students from Western Melbourne who were enrolled at Monash Clayton was miniscule, at 2.5 per cent.

In addition, the enrolment rate at Deakin University among students from the east (especially Eastern Outer Melbourne and the Yarra Ranges) was considerably higher than the university's overall share of students. Table 1 shows that only a very small proportion of school completers made the journey from the northern and western SSDs to attend the Deakin Burwood campus. Similar imbalances in enrolment were also noticeable for Monash's Caulfield campus, located in the inner south and Swinburne's Hawthorn and Prahran campuses in the inner east.

The university campuses located in the inner city shown in Table 1 (RMIT City and the University of Melbourne) attract students from a wider range of areas. One of the main reasons for this is their central location and therefore easy accessibility by public transport. The table shows that students from the north and west were slightly more likely to attend RMIT than those from the east and south. Attendance rates for the University of Melbourne were very high among students who attended school in the Inner Melbourne SSD, above average in some parts of the east and south, closer to average in the inner/middle west and northern suburbs and tended to be lowest in the outer areas (except the Yarra Ranges SSD).

It is worth noting that the attendance rates among students enrolled at a government school in the inner city are particularly high due to the fact that Melbourne's two large academically selective government schools are located in the Inner Melbourne SSD. Unlike other government schools in Melbourne, students at the selective schools do not predominantly reside close to their school. Most students commute to the school from other areas of Melbourne, so therefore the link between residential and university location is not accurately portrayed in these figures for this group.

Universities in the north and west of Melbourne

Table 2 is arranged in the same way as Table 1, but this time examines university campuses located in the north and west. Again, the geographic match between the location of university and school attended is prevalent. A large proportion of students who enrolled at university and attended government schools in the Northern Middle and Northern Outer Melbourne SSDs went to either La Trobe Bundoora or RMIT Bundoora, both located close to the border between these two SSDs. Of the students from these areas who enrolled

School location	North and Western university campuses (% of all university enrolments among government school applicants)							
	La Trobe Bundoora	*RMIT Bundoora*	*Victoria University (All)*	*Other Uni Metro Melb*	*Rest of Vic Campus*	*Other^*	*University enrolments (%)*	*Total university enrolments*
Inner region								
Inner Melbourne	7.7	2.6	1.9	85.4	2.0	0.4	100	782
Northern and Western regions								
Inner/Middle								
Western Melbourne	10.7	4.9	26.6	50.8	6.7	0.3	100	638
Moreland City	21.5	14.0	10.8	51.6	2.2	0.0	100	93
Northern Middle Melbourne	26.1	13.1	5.9	51.2	3.7	0.0	100	406
Outer								
Melton-Wyndham	6.4	2.4	35.2	30.4	25.6	0.0	100	125
Hume City	13.9	18.8	21.8	38.2	7.3	0.0	100	165
Northern Outer Melbourne	25.2	21.4	4.9	44.0	4.1	0.4	100	266
Eastern and Southern regions								
Inner/Middle								
Boroondara City	8.8	3.8	2.2	82.7	2.3	0.2	100	554
Eastern Middle Melbourne	6.8	3.3	2.6	84.4	2.6	0.2	100	1,248
Southern Melbourne	1.4	2.9	6.9	85.4	3.3	0.0	100	419
Greater Dandenong City	2.8	2.3	9.2	83.9	1.8	0.0	100	217
Eastern Outer Melbourne	9.7	3.2	2.4	77.7	6.4	0.5	100	373
Outer								
Yarra Ranges Shire Part A	6.4	1.9	5.8	78.8	7.1	0.0	100	156
South Eastern Outer Melb.	2.7	2.3	5.4	74.7	14.9	0.0	100	221
Frankston City	4.7	1.4	9.5	74.3	10.1	0.0	100	148
Mornington Peninsula Shire	4.5	1.1	2.3	71.6	18.2	2.3	100	88
Total Metropolitan Melbourne	**9.5**	**5.3**	**7.7**	**72.4**	**5.0**	**0.2**	**100**	**5,899**
Total Yr 12 VTAC enrolments	**561**	**310**	**452**	**4,268**	**294**	**14**	**5,899**	
Median ENTER for VTAC offer	**80.35**	**75.35**	**71.05**	**84.95***	**68.85**	**87.18**	**82.65**	**82.65**

Table 2: Year 12 government school applicant university enrolments by school SSD for selected campuses located in northern and western suburbs, 2005

Source: VTAC unpublished 2004/05
^Interstate or overseas university campuses applied for through VTAC
**median for all Metro Melbourne university campuses*

School location	*Outer Eastern and Southern university campuses (% of all university enrolments among government school applicants)*							
	Monash Berwick	*Monash Peninsula*	*Swinburne Lilydale*	*Other Uni Metro Melb*	*Rest of Vic Campus*	*Other^*	*University enrolments (%)*	*Total university enrolments*
Inner region								
Inner Melbourne	0.8	0.5	0.4	95.9	2.0	0.4	100	782
Northern and Western regions								
Inner/Middle								
Western Melbourne	0.0	0.0	0.5	92.5	6.7	0.3	100	638
Moreland City	0.0	0.0	1.1	96.8	2.2	0.0	100	93
Northern Middle Melbourne	0.0	0.7	1.5	94.1	3.7	0.0	100	406
Outer								
Melton-Wyndham	0.0	0.0	0.0	74.4	25.6	0.0	100	125
Hume City	0.0	0.0	0.0	92.7	7.3	0.0	100	165
Northern Outer Melbourne	0.0	0.0	0.8	94.7	4.1	0.4	100	266
Eastern and Southern regions								
Inner/Middle								
Boroondara City	0.9	0.2	3.4	93.0	2.3	0.2	100	554
Eastern Middle Melbourne	2.0	0.3	4.6	90.1	2.6	0.2	100	1,248
Southern Melbourne	2.6	4.1	1.7	88.3	3.3	0.0	100	419
Greater Dandenong City	5.5	0.9	8.8	82.9	1.8	0.0	100	217
Eastern Outer Melbourne	2.7	0.5	10.2	79.6	6.4	0.5	100	373
Outer								
Yarra Ranges Shire Part A	0.6	0.0	12.2	80.1	7.1	0.0	100	156
South Eastern Outer Melbourne	11.3	3.2	5.4	65.2	14.9	0.0	100	221
Frankston City	2.7	10.1	2.0	75.0	10.1	0.0	100	148
Mornington Peninsula Shire	2.3	12.5	1.1	63.6	18.2	2.3	100	88
Total Metropolitan Melbourne	**1.7**	**1.1**	**3.2**	**88.7**	**5.0**	**0.2**	**100**	**5,899**
Total Yr 12 VTAC enrolments	**101**	**66**	**191**	**5,233**	**294**	**14**	**5,899**	
Median ENTER for VTAC offer	**78.15**	**81.70**	**64.50**	**84.95***	**68.85**	**87.18**	**82.65**	**82.65**

Table 3: Year 12 government school applicant university enrolments by school SSD for selected campuses located in outer eastern and southern suburbs, 2005

Source: VTAC unpublished 2004/05
^Interstate or overseas university campuses applied for through VTAC
**median for all Metro Melbourne university campuses*

at university in 2005, 46.6 per cent from Northern Outer and 39.2 per cent from Northern Middle Melbourne were enrolled at one of these two campuses. Compared with the overall market share of enrolments held by these university campuses (14.8 per cent), the local loyalty to these campuses is substantial.

Victoria University has campuses spread throughout the western suburbs of Melbourne, from inner suburban campuses such as Footscray to outer suburban satellite campuses in Melton and Sunbury (Figure 1). Table 2 shows a large proportion of students from the western SSDs in Melbourne enrolled at Victoria University. Thirty-five per cent of government school students from Melton-Wyndham who enrolled at a university in 2005 did so at Victoria University. Similarly, the figures for Western Melbourne (26.6 per cent) and Hume (21.8 per cent) were particularly high given that Victoria University held only a 7.7 per cent share of all Melbourne government school university enrolees in 2005. By contrast, Victoria University had very few enrolments from among government school students who attended school in Inner Melbourne (1.9 per cent), Boroondara (2.2 per cent) and Eastern Middle Melbourne (2.6 per cent).

Among the SSDs in the west of Melbourne, it is also interesting to note that more than one-quarter of all university enrolments by students from the Melton-Wyndham SSD in 2005 were at university campuses in regional Victoria. One of the reasons for this is that the Melton-Wyndham SSD is relatively close to the provincial centres of Geelong and Ballarat, both of which are home to large regional university campuses.

Universities in the outer east and south of Melbourne

Among the small university campuses located in the outer eastern and southern suburbs, the pattern of local enrolment is also noticeable (Table 3). Swinburne's Lilydale campus, situated in the foothills of the Yarra Ranges, attracted 12.2 per cent of enrolments of Yarra Ranges students and 10.2 per cent of university enrolments of Eastern Outer Melbourne government school students, despite accounting for only 3.2 per cent of all metropolitan enrolments.

Monash University's Berwick campus, a small campus in the outer south east of Melbourne comprising only 1.7 per cent of all enrolments in Melbourne by government school students in 2005, attracted 11.3 per cent of all university enrolments from students who attended a government school in the South Eastern Outer Melbourne SSD. A similar situation is apparent for Monash's Peninsula campus, located in Frankston and nearby the Mornington Peninsula. Among government school completers from Frankston who enrolled at university, 10.1 per cent attended the Monash Peninsula campus and for Mornington Peninsula students, the figure was 12.5 per cent. This figure, in the context of the small total market share of this campus (1.1

	Hume City	*South Eastern Outer Melbourne*	*Total Melbourne*
Socioeconomic characteristics			
Professional head of family (%)	7.2	7.9	13.1
Weekly family income above $2,000 (%)	3.4	4.2	6.8
Schools with high EMA/Youth Allowance (%)	50.0	11.1	30.5
SEIFA Education Occupation Index (score)	927	944	1026
Year 12 outcomes (government school students)			
Median ENTER	46.00	53.20	61.45
University offers (%)	37.0	31.8	46.8
Enrolment rate of those with university offer (%)	86.6	76.2	83.1
University enrolment rate of all VTAC applicants (%)	32.7	24.6	38.8

Table 4: Socioeconomic profile (2001) and Year 12 university outcomes (2004) for government school students in Hume City and South Eastern Outer Melbourne

Source: Australian Census of Population and Housing 2001, customised matrix, ABS (2001) Socioeconomic Indexes For Areas, V1.5.32 and VTAC 2004/05 unpublished

per cent), highlights its strong local patronage. Further evidence in support of the hypothesis that universities attract local students is that in 2005 there were no enrolments by students from schools in any of the northern or western SSDs at Monash Berwick and only 3 enrolments at Monash Peninsula.

Other influences on attendance

While proximity to university campuses appears to be an important factor, there are clearly many related issues that underpin the university attendance patterns shown in the tables above. Attendance is shaped by university academic entrance requirements (Edwards, 2008b), cultural capital (Teese & Polesel, 2003), economic capital and other factors. Cultural and economic resources are generally concentrated within geographic pockets of large cities, and therefore overall university attendance rates differ substantially between suburbs (Birrell, Rapson, Dobson, Edwards, & Smith, 2002; Edwards, Birrell, & Smith, 2005).

These resources are also linked to Year 12 academic outcomes, which have a substantial bearing on the post-school destinations of school completers. For young people in their final years of schooling, initial choice of university is determined by subject interest (Harvey-Beavis & Elsworth, 1998). However, when it comes to applying for a university place, other practical considerations become important. One of the most crucial of these considerations for individuals is whether they can achieve the academic entry requirements for their preferred course. While the tables above examine only those students who did manage to gain access to university courses, there are vast differences in university participation rates among Year 12 completers between the regions of Melbourne (Birrell et al., 2002; Edwards, 2005).

Across Melbourne, the entrance levels set by institutions and campuses vary substantially (Edwards, 2008b). This means that there are both academic and geographic accessibility issues for some students. For students who live near university campuses that have low entry levels, university attendance rates can be higher than in other areas with similar Year 12 achievement levels that are not in close proximity to academically accessible campuses. This added dimension of the geographic link with university attendance is explored below using the example of two areas of Melbourne.

The combined pressures of geographic and academic accessibility

Numerous factors influence university attendance, among them, geographical location and academic achievement have been highlighted in this paper as being important. A close comparison of two areas of Melbourne – Hume City in the outer north-west and South Eastern Outer Melbourne – helps to emphasise the role that a local 'academically accessible' university can play in providing a university pathway for disadvantaged students.

Table 4 outlines some key socioeconomic characteristics and Year 12 outcomes for government school students who attended schools in Hume and South Eastern Outer Melbourne. Both of these areas have relatively low socioeconomic status when compared with Melbourne averages. Comparing these two SSDs, South Eastern Outer Melbourne has a slightly higher proportion of families with a professional head and a larger proportion of families with incomes of $2,000 or more per week. In Hume, half the secondary schools are ranked as particularly needy, with large concentrations of students receiving the Education Maintenance Allowance or Youth Allowance, whereas the figure for 'needy' schools is only 11 per cent in South Eastern Outer Melbourne. The Australian Bureau of Statistics index of education and occupation score (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001) for these areas is also slightly lower in Hume.

In terms of Year 12 academic achievement, the median Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER) for students from these two areas is low in comparison to the median for all Melbourne government school students – slightly lower in Hume than in South Eastern Outer Melbourne. These results are consistent with the established positive relationship between higher academic outcomes and higher socioeconomic status. However, the link between socioeconomic status and educational achievement changes when university offer and enrolment rates are taken into account.

As shown in Table 4, government school students from Hume were more likely than their peers on the other side of the city to gain a university offer and were much more likely to enrol at university if they did receive an offer. Of all 2004 Year 12 VTAC applicants, nearly one-third of Hume students were enrolled at university in 2005, while less than a quarter of those from South Eastern Outer Melbourne were in the same

position. This is despite the fact that students from South Eastern Outer Melbourne came from slightly more affluent families and had slightly higher tertiary entrance scores.

The key difference between these two areas is that Hume students live relatively close to campuses of Victoria University that offer a wide range of disciplines and have relatively low entrance requirements (Edwards, 2008a), whereas there are no university campuses in the south east of Melbourne that are both academically and geographically accessible for students in the area. The lack of a comparable local option for students in the outer south east suggests that fewer students are in a position to enrol at university.

Conclusion

This paper has explored one dimension of the university entrance pathway that Year 12 students can take at the end of each school year. It has built on prior research relating to university entrance by focussing specifically on the link between university location and student location, using Melbourne as a case study. The results of this analysis have shown that there is a clear pattern of enrolment at local universities among Year 12 government school students in 2004. The paper has also shown that within Melbourne, living in close proximity to academically accessible university campuses can also help raise the likelihood of attending university.

These findings highlight the need for universities in large suburban settings to understand and pay particular attention to students and schools in their geographic catchment areas. By identifying and understanding their core geographic catchments, universities have the ability to engage more closely with schools, so as to help foster good academic programs, and to connect with students before they enter the university setting thus helping them to make more informed choices regarding courses and form realistic expectations of their university experiences. This paper also provides a reference for government and university policy-makers when allocating new university places or perhaps identifying areas for new university campuses. The findings suggest that if new places and campuses are situated in high growth areas of the outer suburbs of large metropolitan areas, they have the potential to increase participation in these areas.

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