

I strongly support extending Melbourne's Free Tram Zone, and specifically, extending the Zone to the University of Melbourne on Swanston Street and Elizabeth Streets, and in the other direction, extending the Zone past Arts Centre Melbourne to the War Memorial on St Kilda Road.

In Southbank, such an extension would make the Melbourne Arts Precinct – already one of the most vibrant, unique and concentrated in the world – more accessible to the general public, and encourage participation in the arts and creative industries.

At the moment, I believe that the Free Tram Zone is disingenuous, in that it caters for ticket inspectors rather than customers. Ticket inspectors congregate at the stops just outside the Free Tram Zone at either end of Swanston Street, and specifically target international students at RMIT and the University of Melbourne (who are not entitled to concession discounts). Ticket inspectors in our city have a long and documented reputation for needless aggression, intimidation and escalation. Any benefit in terms of unpaid tickets that they recoup is massively offset by the poor impression that such menacing behaviour leaves on tourists and international students.

In its current form, the design of the Free Tram Zone seems to indulge the quota-driven targets of ticket inspectors, rather than encouraging the use of public transport in a meaningful way.

Kind regards,

Eric Gardiner

