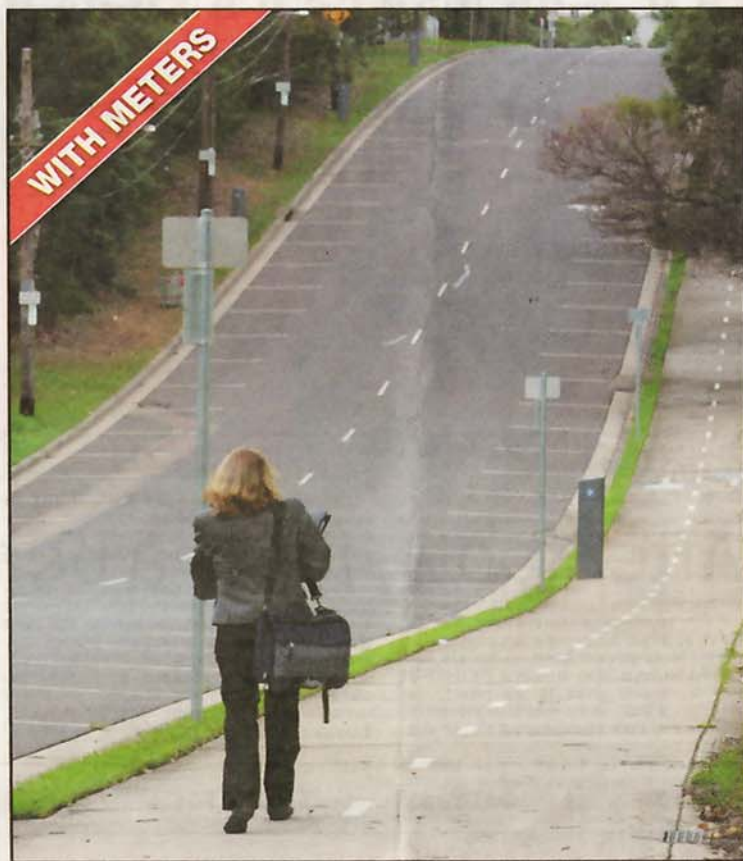
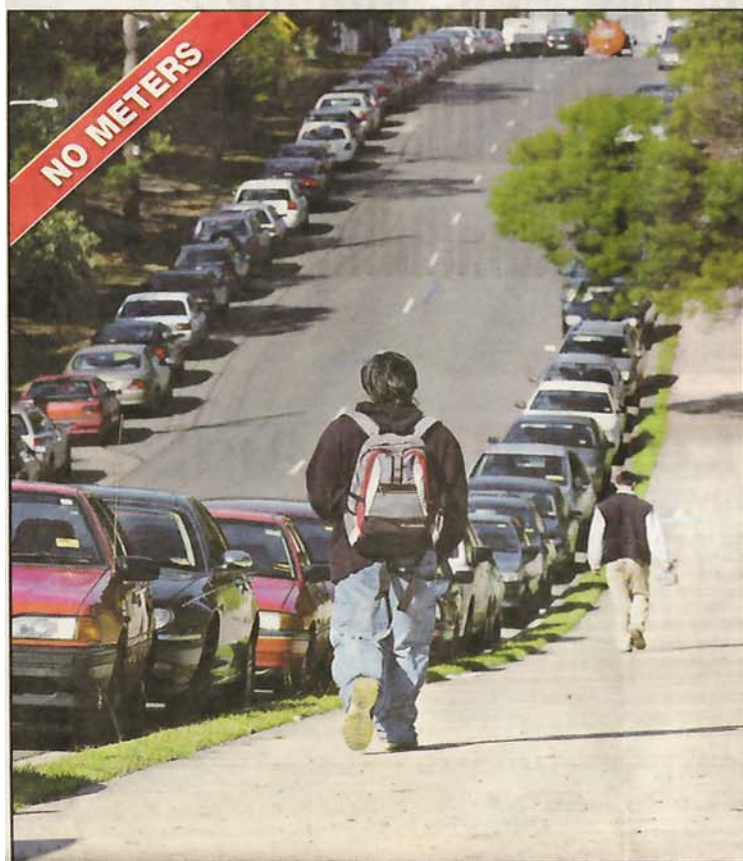


Motorists filling coffers of greedy councils

Meters worth \$50m



Before and after ... Talavera Rd, Macquarie Park was popular with motorists (left) but they have now abandoned the street as a parking location (right)

EXCLUSIVE

By **KELVIN BISSETT**
Investigations Editor

MOTORISTS are fighting back against the spread of parking meters into suburban Sydney as an investigation reveals the devices handed councils a windfall of almost \$50 million last year.

The extent of the cash grab comes as the latest batch of meters installed last November at the Macquarie Park business corridors are hit by a boycott, turning them into white elephants.

The 100 pay-and-display machines, purchased at a cost of \$867,000 to ratepayers, have turned Ryde's Talavera Rd, Culloden Rd and Giffnock Ave into empty windswept avenues.

An investigation by *The Daily Telegraph* can reveal the 15 councils known to have the machines last year generated \$49,163,000 from coins and

Grabbing your cash

What parking meters earned your council last year *

<input type="checkbox"/> City of Sydney.....	\$20,687,000
<input type="checkbox"/> North Sydney.....	\$5,965,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Newcastle.....	\$4,709,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Waverley.....	\$4,640,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Manly.....	\$3,014,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Leichhardt.....	\$2,463,000
<input type="checkbox"/> Willoughby.....	\$2,273,000

* Figures from 2005/06 financial statements

the increasing number of credit cards swiped through the devices.

A survey of council financial statements shows Sydney City generated \$20.68 million in 2005-06 followed by North Sydney with \$5.97 million, Newcastle (\$4.71 million) and Waverley (\$4.64 million).

This revenue is separate from the \$116 million worth of parking fines issued by council rangers.

Some councils, led by Waverley, are finally responding to the growing public backlash against paid parking.

Waverley Mayor George Newhouse said last night he had been "working hard on striking the right balance" on managing street parking.

In one of his recent initiatives, drivers no longer pay to park in some streets in Bondi Junction after 6pm with the meters also switched off in the evening in parts of Grafton St and Bronte Rd. Another initiative includes scrapping the fee for the first residential parking sticker, effective from July.

Mr Newhouse boasted that since becoming mayor the number of infringements issued for wayward parking had dropped 18 per cent.

His softer approach to parking follows neighbouring Randwick Council's abandonment last year — in the face of community outrage — of plans for thousands of metered parking bays.

Parramatta Council, which intro-

duced parking meters in 2005, last October reduced its hourly parking meter rates in its CBD district and is now turning off the meters on Sundays and public holidays.

The meters at Ryde have forced workers to park their cars in the nearby Macquarie Shopping Centre, among the last Sydney malls to offer untimed parking.

Mall manager Michael Wappett said he expected the centre would soon have to limit parking to three hours to ensure there was room for genuine shoppers.

Ryde Mayor Ivan Petch said he expected the pay-and-display meters would get much more use when the new Chatswood-Epping Rail Link opens next year.

He said a new Optus headquarters at Macquarie Park, to open later this year, will house 6000 workers but has car spaces for just 2000.

"It's not that the meters won't be used — we are waiting for the influx," Mr Petch said.