

Podcast 154 – My Local Shopping Centre

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 154 – My Local Shopping Centre

<https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/slowenglish/podcast154.mp3>

(This podcast is 11 minutes and 8 seconds long.)

Hi,

The local shops are where we buy our daily requirements for living. Whilst it is possible nowadays to buy things online and have them delivered (see [Podcast 12](#)), there are many people who still prefer to shop personally. They enjoy the experience of going to the shops and meeting other people in the process. Even if you prefer to shop online, there will often be times when you must visit the shops to buy something specific, or something that you need straight away. In this podcast, I would like to talk about our local retail shopping centre and the shopping experience here in Australia.

Shopping centres are very popular in Australia. A shopping centre is a large single building with a single roof which contains many different types of stores, shops and businesses. Such shopping centres have at least one major well-known department store and/or supermarket. Many of the larger shopping centres have several of these. These major stores have the biggest number of customers who come on a regular basis, which guarantees that a large number of people will attend and shop at the shopping centre. Surrounding these major stores are many smaller retail shops which typically sell particular types of specialist products. Examples would include women's or men's clothing, books,

shoes, electrical goods, luggage, florists, jewellers, mobile phone sellers – just to name a few. Along with these, there will be other types of businesses such as cafes, doctors' practices, dentists, restaurants, men's barbers, women's hair salons, bank branches, furniture shops, travel agents, dry cleaners, cinemas – the list goes on. In effect, the smaller shops and other businesses can operate successfully because they are able to attract some of the customers who come to the shopping centre to visit the major stores. Furthermore, the excellent air conditioning in shopping centres means they are always a comfortable environment for people, especially on hot summer days in Australia. In our local shopping centre, you can also find the local public library, which is a logical place for it to be.



One of the walkways at my local shopping centre..

<https://www.thepinescentre.com.au/>

An important part of every shopping centre is the inclusion of a large on-site car park, with enough car parking to ensure that, when you visit, you can almost always find a parking spot. This fits in with Australians' love of car travel. We love to drive our cars everywhere, so having a large carpark on-site means we are more likely to visit. It's interesting to note that using the car park is free. That's certainly the case at our local shopping centre. However, I have noticed that larger shopping centres now charge a fee (albeit a low fee) if you stay for a longer than 3 hours, although the fee is usually not more than \$3 to \$5 per hour.

<https://www.westfield.com.au/doncaster>

Shopping centres were first introduced into Australia in 1957 with the opening of the Chermside Shopping Centre in Brisbane in May 1957. It had 25 smaller retailers and one major department store. Since then, the story of shopping centres in Australia has been a great success. I can remember as a teenager their first introduction into my hometown of Bunbury in Western Australia, a town (back then) of around (by my estimate) 10,000 people. Prior to then, people would travel to the centre of Bunbury to do their shopping. As Bunbury grew quickly in the 1960's and 1970s, it meant that some people had to travel quite a way to buy their groceries, their clothes and/or other household goods. Local shopping centres meant they didn't have to go to the town centre. Bunbury's first shopping centre was called the Bunbury Plaza. It's main attraction was a major supermarket, a central area where people could sit and relax and several other smaller shops, all under the one roof. Of course, the car park was also a big plus, as parking in the centre of town was always a bit of a hassle. The Bunbury Plaza back then was not a large shopping centre, but the advantages of having many shops under one roof was instantly apparent. I can especially remember the wonderful bakery at this new shopping centre, where the cakes and bread rolls were excellent. We thought our new

shopping centre was very modern. Today, Bunbury is a city with around 50,000 people and it has many shopping centres, as well as a range of shops still in the centre of the city.

There is also something socially important about a shopping centre. As well as shopping, it provides a place where people can meet, where they can interact with others and feel part of a community. Almost all shopping centres have a food court, a single larger area with a range of small takeaway food shops, cafes, restaurants and hot food kiosks. Often, these small businesses will have their own seating, but importantly, in the centre of the food court, there will also be a large number of tables and chairs which are owned by the shopping centre, for use by anybody who buys food and drinks in the food court.

Often, some of these tables and chairs will be arranged in groups, so that several people can sit around one table. This is a place where people can meet and talk. They can chat over a coffee and piece of cake, enjoy the company of their friends over a lunch of sushi, sandwiches or a meat pie (with tomato sauce of course). There they can talk about what is happening in their lives and what is important to them, their families and friends. Often, just being in the food court will mean you will see friends and neighbours walking by, resulting in a conversation and a friendly chat. In my local shopping centre, I often see a group of around 10 older men who meet there together. It's obviously an important part of their week and to me, it demonstrates a critical and important function of shopping centres in Australia. They are places where people can meet and enjoy each other's company.



The food court at our local shopping centre.

High school students also gather in small groups in the food court after school, to swap stories of the day and talk about what is on their phones. Whether you are young or old, we all need social interaction which helps keep us mentally healthy.

My wife and I will often walk to the shopping centre just to have a coffee and a small snack. It's great to sit, have time to talk and to feel that we are part of a vibrant and friendly community. I think that is an important part of being happy.

If you have a question or comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 154 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

[Start quiz](#)

Vocabulary

- Play albeit = even though, although
- Play arranged = organised
- Play attract = (here) when people come to your shop because they like what you are selling
- Play attraction = (here) the thing that people like, so they go to see it, buy it
- Play barbers = people who cut men's hair, they work in a barber shop
- Play cinemas = place which show films
- Play critical = (here) very, very important
- Play delivered = brought to you
- Play demonstrates = shows
- Play dry cleaner = a special type of cleaning for clothes (which removes difficult stains)
- Play ensure = make sure
- Play estimate = guess
- Play florists = shops that sell flowers (also describes the person who works in the store)
- Play function = a role

- Play guarantees = (here) makes it certain that it will happen
- Play hair salons = places where women get their hair cut and shaped
- Play hassle = when something is very difficult to do
- Play inclusion = when something has been added (or included)
- Play instantly apparent = can be seen or recognized immediately
- Play interact = (here) when you talk with or communicate with other people
- Play introduced = started
- Play local = nearby, close to where you live
- Play logical = makes sense
- Play luggage = suitcases and bags used to carry your belongings
- Play major = larger, more important, bigger
- Play mentally = to do with how people feel about themselves
- Play on-site = (here) at the place we are talking about
- Play operate = a term you use to say that a business (or machine) is working
- Play particular = when you are thinking of one thing which you can describe well
- Play personally = when you do something yourself
- Play plus = (here) advantage
- Play prefer = like more than something else

- Play range = a large number of things of different types
- Play regular basis = when something happens over and over again at the same time
- Play requirements = things that you need
- Play retail = the name for the industry where things are sold to everyday consumers (like you and me)
- Play shops = places where you can buy things, usually refers to smaller businesses
- Play snack = something small which you eat between the 3 main meals of the day
- Play socially = to do with people interacting with one another
- Play specific = something that you can clearly describe
- Play stores = places where you can buy things, usually refers to larger businesses
- Play straight away = immediately
- Play surrounding = to be around something else, usually on all sides
- Play sushi = a type of food made with rice and other ingredients (from Japan)
- Play typically = an example of something that you see many times
- Play vibrant = when something is interesting, has energy and is exciting