

Submission

No 5

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Robert Menzies College
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Position: Master
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RMC
ROBERT MENZIES COLLEGE

The Committee Manager
Social Policy Committee
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An Anglican College affiliated
with Macquarie University

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Dear Committee Manager

Re: Affordable Student Accommodation and Illegal Boarding Houses

As head of Robert Menzies College (RMC), a not-for-profit Anglican residential college affiliated with Macquarie University, I am well aware of the need for affordable student accommodation in the City of Ryde (CoR) area. Approximately half of our student members are International students and the remainder are from rural and regional Australia. We have been made aware from press reports and personal anecdotes of some of the less than desirable accommodation used by students in surrounding streets.

I would like to inform your Committee that despite the complex financial situation that Australia is currently facing RMC currently has under construction an independently financed building to house an additional 102 Macquarie students (half fully catered and half self-catered) from early 2012. This project is probably the most significant new student housing initiative being undertaken at present in CoR for the 2012 year.

While the majority of RMC students have their meals provided for them some older accommodation is also being modified to provide 50 places for students who will use shared facilities to cook for themselves while still enjoying the benefits of college living including academic and pastoral support. RMC is very keen to provide accommodation that is not only affordable in dollar terms but also one that provides a positive learning environment and that commends Australia to any international students.

Construction of student accommodation at a contemporary standard is quite costly. In the case of the new RMC building the cost including fees and fit-out is approximately \$100,000 per person. Any initiatives that the NSW government can take to ease cost burdens would be a positive step in the overall improvement of the student accommodation available.

Your committee should already be aware that successful access to NRAS funds for student housing in NSW has been far less than in WA, Queensland and Victoria: <http://ncoss.org.au/resources/20101206-NRAS-fact-sheet.pdf>. Also there are significant practical problems for existing suppliers of student accommodation because of the imposition of the NSW Tenancy Act on any new NRAS funded rooms conflicting with existing arrangements in university colleges and halls of residence.

I would be glad to be informed of any other sources of funding support that RMC could access to assist the College meet the construction and fit-out cost of our new building.

Yours sincerely


Professor Chris Bellenger

Master