

Submission

No 58

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Consulate General of India

Name: Mr Amit Dasgupta

Date Received: 17/10/2011



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No.SYD/551/02/2011

October 10, 2011

*Your Excellency,
Dear Mr. Notley-Smith,*

I will be grateful if you could please refer to your communication of 20th September. Annexed, in this regard, is a note prepared by the Consulate and may be seen in the form of a submission, as requested.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Amit Dasgupta)

Hon. Bruce Notley-Smith MP

Chair, Legislative Assembly Social Policy Committee

Parliament of New South Wales

Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

International student Accommodation Inquiry NSW – Submission

One of the major problems confronting Indian students in Australia is the non-availability of affordable accommodation when they come here to study. The problem is acute in Sydney, which attracts a considerable number of international students. The choices of accommodation of these international students generally vary in the following categories:

- (i) Student accommodation in student halls or campus;
- (ii) Hired accommodation provided by the institutions for use by international students;
- (iii) Home stays;
- (iv) Shared accommodation by students hired in private accommodation;
- (v) Indian students coming to study in universities and in pursuit of higher education generally prefer accommodation near to their place of study to be able to avail of the facilities provided by the universities such as library, computer accessibility, lab facility etc. Such accommodation is generally on the expensive side but ensures safety and security of the students, opportunities to inter-mix with students of other nationalities. However, such accommodation is usually far short of the demand and hence many students, who would like to take benefit from such campus residency, are forced to move out to other places. Institutions are also known to have empanelled private accommodation and such accommodation is also reasonable expensive. Given the high demand, some universities have started constructing on campus accommodation.

The bulk of the Indian students who come to NSW take admission in the vocational courses run by private institutions. Such institutions rarely have the required infrastructure to ensure proper accommodation for the students once they arrive. In most cases, the students are left to fend for themselves and they end up in shared accommodation located far away from their place of study and in the fringe suburbs. Safety and security in such areas become a major concern. It was seen that in the attacks on Indian students in 2009, most of the casualties occurred amongst students who were to travel to outer Sydney after their study or work. Besides, students face problem in hiring private accommodation due to their inability to provide past rental history and references. They are forced to stay in houses which are over-crowded and hence, exploited by the house owners. The Consulate had to

intervene to help some students who were evicted by the landlords after they complained about lack of basic facilities. It is understood that student accommodation is outside the purview of the Residential Tenancy Act, which makes the international student vulnerable to exploitation including allegations of sexual exploitation. It is also noted that there is gross over-crowding to reduce the rental burden ["hot beds"].

The following measures, if adopted, might alleviate the grievances of international students in their search for suitable accommodation in Sydney and other areas of NSW:

- Universities should try, as far as possible, to ensure either student accommodation in campus or nearby through accredited house owners to provide at reasonable rates to students at least in their first year of studies.
- Private education providers in the VET sector as well as TAFE should ensure affordable accommodation for international students before visa is granted.
- Suitable legal framework may be put in place to protect interests of international students from exploitation by landlords.