

Submission

No 10

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Australian Catholic University

Name: Professor Greg Craven

Position: Vice Chancellor

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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

4 October 2011

The Committee Manager
Social Policy Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Legislative Assembly - Inquiry into International Student Accommodation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the International Student Accommodation Inquiry.

Australian Catholic University (ACU) operates on six campuses in four state and territory jurisdictions.

The University has on-campus accommodation on its Ballarat campus and leased accommodation within the City of Ballarat. It is exploring a residence in metropolitan Sydney. In Canberra the university partners with the Sisters of St Joseph to provide accommodation for female students.

International students are accommodated in Home Stay and Residential and private rental accommodation services.

The need to facilitate accommodation for students is critical in attracting both international and regional and remote students at ACU's urban campuses. Accommodation has a direct impact on retention rates for students. The ACU Counselling Service lists accommodation concerns in the top five issues that students address through the service.

The university recognises that the cost of accommodation in urban areas is prohibitive for many students and that this may lead to overcrowding, hot bedding and exploitation of students as tenants.

Factors affecting the capacity of the university providing student accommodation in Sydney include the high cost of land, the high cost of obtaining consent for residential developments, the high risk in making the capital outlay for low cost accommodation where the commercial return is low and the need to provide allied services.

Student accommodation needs to be located adjacent to transport hubs. These sites are frequently more expensive to purchase and develop. Less expensive locations do not have the transport infrastructures and services to support student needs.

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The provision of reasonable quality and reasonably priced accommodation for International students is a significant reputational issue and will be critical in the continued recruitment of international students.

If current inappropriate accommodation is banned with no remedial action in Sydney, students will be forced to choose other interstate educational venues with the subsequent loss to the NSW economy.

The current situation is, however, untenable; significant numbers of students are in substandard and highly dangerous accommodation. This could lead to tragic events such as a fire in a unit, an outbreak of illness, poor hygiene, aggression and psychological stress and personal safety issues.

As this overcrowding is most prevalent with international students it impacts on community attitudes to people from different cultures and strains the capacity of the community to integrate people in their local setting.

Recognising the value of International students to the NSW economy through their fee income, tourism connections and contribution as workers and consumers, ACU urges the NSW Government to develop a state strategy for student accommodation. This strategy should address the following:

1. Work with educational providers to support the provision of accommodation for students in urban areas. This could include an interest subsidy scheme on new accommodation developments or state government bonds. This would also provide a stimulus for the building and construction industries.
2. Facilitate and encourage collaboration between educational providers to improve access to accommodation.
3. Ensure compliance with the current standards of accommodation for low cost housing and tenancy rights in NSW.

If you require any additional information to the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Greg Craven
Vice-Chancellor

Cc.
Professor Anne Cummins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students, Learning & Teaching)
Mr Chris Riley, Executive Director, International
Mr Con O'Donnell, Director, Properties