

Submission

No 47

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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On the Accommodation of International Students in NSW

Accommodation is most concerned about by international students for overseas study and takes a very important part of their daily expenses while living abroad. A survey on International Students Accommodation in terms of living conditions, price, security and management among the Chinese students in NSW shows that the accommodation for international students is not satisfactory. The following are the results of the survey.

I. Accommodation Categories

Currently, accommodation for Chinese students in NSW mainly falls into three categories:

1. Private house

Such kind of housing usually needs to be found via property agents, or rented directly from the owner through newspaper advertising. The agents charge a certain amount of commission. When making application, students must provide some documents to show their financial conditions and personal credibility. Therefore, it usually takes a long time to apply and is quite complicated and risky as well, only a very small number of Chinese students choose to live in private houses. Some others choose home-stay. But it is mainly suitable for younger students, or those who intend to improve their English and learn local customs in daily life with the locals. Because the rent is usually quite high (from about AUD1200 per month), very few students will choose home-stay for a long time.

2. Student apartment

Unlike universities in China, Australian universities only provide limited student housing. This kind of housing is usually in the form of apartment with good living conditions and advanced facilities, including Coffee shop, TV room, entertainment room, automatic laundry, etc. The apartment is generally separated into single suites with furniture, common equipment and simple kitchen together with cutlery. For example, in UNSW, student apartments are basically in the form of Studio, Bedsit, and Multi-share, etc, with prices from AUD199 to AUD450 per person a week. A certain number of Chinese students choose to live in such apartments.

3. Shared housing

The third kind of students' accommodation is to rent a room or living room shared with others at comparatively cheaper prices, but with worse living conditions. Very often, 7-9 students or even more live in the same house or unit and sometimes, they might have to fight for bathroom, which is very inconvenient. Meanwhile, the students' privacy and the safety of their belongings can not be guaranteed. Most of Chinese students choose this kind of accommodation for the prices are cheaper.

II. Accommodation Location

According to the survey, most Chinese students choose to live near to the universities they are studying in even if the housing prices are much higher, where they could enjoy more convenient life with public facilities available, could avoid transportation from and to the universities and could have more job opportunities, entertaining choices and sound security environment.

III. Renting Fee

In the past few years, the cost for accommodation have been rocketing in NSW, especially in Sydney, adding more financial burden to the international students.

In UNSW, international students need to pay about \$180 a week for a single room in a unit

near the university, like the suburb of Kingsford, more than \$220 a week for a single room, and about \$400 a week for a master room.

In the USYD, living in the college village costs international students about \$280 to \$450 per week, and they still need to pay about \$180 to \$250 per week even when sharing a room with others. If they live in areas far from the university at lower prices, the transportation adds to the expenses.

Comparatively, students in UTS enjoy more reasonable prices for renting a room in the college village with better living environment. For example, in the old college village of Gumal and the new built college village of Yura Mudang, student could have a single room with brand new furniture and facilities and a shared kitchen, costing about \$220 a week. More importantly, it is much safer to live in the village than outside the campus.

IV. Living Environment

In the survey, we find that most students hope to live in single rooms for privacy concern; however, in order to reduce their living expenses, they have no choice but to share a room with others. Students living far away from the campus could find a cheaper living room, but the transport takes much time and add to the cost. 30% of the students in the survey are not satisfied with their living environment because of the noisy entertainment, like the pubs, which will have a bad effect on their daily life and study. Most importantly, an increasing number of robberies and burglaries happen around the students' living places with many international students are involved, increasing tension among them. Another problem is that agents or landlords may sometimes take advantage of the poor regulation, having unreasonable requests for seizing the deposit of the tenants or not properly fulfilling the contracts, violating the interest of the international students.

Education export has become an increasingly important industry of Australia and Chinese students play a very important role in promoting China-Australia education collaboration and have contributed significantly to the development of Australian economy.

The Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China is very much concerned about the security and interest of Chinese students here in NSW.

Based on the findings in the survey on International Students Accommodation among Chinese students in NSW, we'd like to submit the following proposals to NSW government for favorable consideration. Hopefully this can provide some help to improve the accommodation for overseas students.

No.1 More university-based accommodation

Almost every interviewee expresses his/ her hope for a chance to get university-based accommodation, which can ensure a good academic environment and less transportation time for the students. The accommodation information that universities release can be much more reliable than housing agencies or newspaper or online advertisements. With the university-based accommodation, international students would have less chance of being deceived or scammed and can save time finding housing everywhere. Therefore, we do hope that universities can provide more university-based accommodation for overseas students.

No.2 Build up a governmental supervised agency providing housing service specialized for overseas students

Currently, the complexity of housing renting market in Sydney is discouraging for overseas students, especially for new comers. Finding a house is a time and energy demanding process, and when holidays come, students have to move away or pay high housing rent even if they are away

from Sydney temporarily. At the same time, students may have to spend much time working with housing agents and landlords for accommodation, even with risk of being scammed. It is important that a governmental supervised agency be built up, providing housing service specialized for overseas students. The agency allows the registration of landlord who is willing to provide their house to students and takes charge of inspecting the housing condition to see whether it can fulfill the students' requirements. The contact and rental payment are all conducted with the agency. Also the government can provide some favorable policies for landlord & student to appeal more international students.

No.3 Build up a housing agency ranking system

If the government cannot build up a specialized agency for overseas students, then hopefully there would be a ranking system for the housing agencies with all around supervision. This system would provide helpful reference for students to seek accommodation.

No.4 Traffic concession for overseas student

If NSW international students enjoy traffic concession, many of them may choose to live considerably far from the universities. In that case, more choices for accommodation would be available to international students.

Above are some of the suggestions to NSW government, and any consideration would be greatly appreciated.

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