



Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education
Parliament of NSW
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

11 November 2020

Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the future development of the NSW tertiary education sector

I refer to questions taken on notice during the hearing I attended on 8 September. I provide the following responses.

1. Are you able to elaborate on a proposal around registration of student accommodation providers?

We recommend that the NSW government improve accountability of unscrupulous accommodation providers and enable international students to identify quality providers. First, education providers, local councils, NSW Fair Trading, international student groups and tenancy/legal assistance services should collaborate, ideally in the form of a well-resourced Taskforce, to share information on scams and unscrupulous practices reported by international students, identify repeat offenders, instigate investigations, and publish findings of unlawful conduct by specific providers. In tandem, local councils with significant international student populations should establish their own centralised investigation system similar to the City of Sydney with appropriate referral pathways.

Secondly, the NSW government should implement a code of practice for commercial student accommodation to establish a clear set of standards regarding quality and enforcement of tenants' rights, and a related accreditation process. The NSW government should also establish a registration scheme for homestay providers.

Finally, our submission also recommends the implementation of a number of NSW regulatory reforms to close loopholes that enable unscrupulous landlords to evade accountability.

2. Are there any other States that we should look at for model protections that are better than New South Wales?

As the Committee may be aware, NSW Fair Trading recently reported on its review of the *Boarding Houses Act*, and recommended that it be reformed as a new *Shared Accommodation Act* with wider coverage – including share house arrangements currently excluded from the *Residential Tenancies Act* (<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/Pages/taled-paper-details.aspx?pk=77910&houseCode=la>). I understand they are working to have legislation drafted for late 2021.

In particular, this would mean share house arrangements would be subject to a revised version of the ‘occupancy principles’ in the *Boarding Houses Act*, including that bonds must be lodged. On the whole, in our view, a new *Shared Accommodation Act* would be as good as or better than current approaches in other jurisdictions.

3. In our survey, and I would need to take the precise figures on notice, a very small number were in commercial housing or university housing

From our 2019 survey of 5,968 international students in Australia, 11% of respondents stayed in university housing on campus. Seven percent of respondents stayed in commercial student accommodation (e.g. Urbanest, Iglu).

Sincerely,

Laurie Berg

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