

**INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AMONGST OLDER
PEOPLE AGED OVER 55 IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 8 June 2022

Partially
Confidential

Dear Committee Chair,

I am an older international student from South Asia (India) completing my PhD in a reputed University in Sydney. I started my PhD in 2018 and lived in Sydney until late 2019. I travelled to South Asia for research purposes and was unable to return due to COVID-19 related lockdowns and restrictions. When international students were given permission to return in January this year, I encountered a number of housing challenges.

Despite evidence to demonstrate a regular income as a Research Assistant and a Tutor at the university, clear rental history (overseas) as well as references vouching for my character and financial stability, I was expected to meet threshold for documentation and evidence that exceeded reasonable standards.

I was able to secure temporary housing through a friend until I found an appropriate rental property. I had to look through multiple sites such as realestate, domain, flatmates and gumtree as I had to find a suitable housing option and move out of my friend's place. I eventually secured a place after offering an additional rent of AUD 10 per week and on the payment of four months of rent in advance.

During my rental search, I experienced direct and indirect discrimination due to my cultural/migrant background. One of my male colleagues from the UK in similar circumstances arrived in Australia only a few months before I did and had no challenges in securing accommodation. At one of the inspections, the real estate agent asked "would you be doing a lot of your style of cooking?". When I inquired further why that would be relevant, he stated that they recently had the walls painted and that I was likely to cause offensive odours which would be difficult to address.

These are some of the examples of the constant knock-backs I have experienced in the housing market and believe the challenges were largely due to the fact that real estate agents have negative attitudes towards older women, women from Asian backgrounds or people on student visas.

The vast majority of government supports in NSW do not take the precarious situations of international students or other people on various temporary visas into account. Even if I was eligible, information in relation to these supports are hard to find. In my case, I had financial capacity to secure a rental property but the others on different temporary visas may not have similar financial capacity and may resort to unsafe housing options. I urge the committee to make recommendations in relation to the needs of older women on various temporary visas and increase the social and affordable housing stock to reduce competition for properties in the private rental market.

I request you to keep my identity confidential, though I welcome you sharing my submission publicly. I thank you for your time and for your consideration.

Sincerely

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