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Ms Amanda Bresnan MLA
Chair
Standing Committee on Education,
Training and Youth Affairs
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

29 June 2011

Dear Ms Bresnan

Thank you for your letter of 16 May 2011 to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ian Young, inviting the ANU to make a submission to the Standing Committee's Inquiry into the accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT.

The ANU is pleased to provide the attached submission.

Please contact me should you require further information.

We look forward to the outcomes of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Deane



Inquiry into the accommodation needs of Tertiary education students in the ACT

Response to the Terms of Reference

Key issues for ANU and ANU students

- The cost of rental accommodation in Canberra and lack of availability of rental properties close to the University.
- The vulnerability of international students trying to secure rental accommodation in the private sector.
- The lack of suitable accommodation for international postgraduate students.
- Low levels of student income support

Background:

The Australian National University (ANU) provides accommodation and related services for approximately 4500 tertiary students through its student residential facilities. This number will rise to 5050 residents in 2012 with the opening of the new 550 bed Student Accommodation 4 building located in the ANU Exchange.

The accommodation system is managed within the Residential and Campus Communities Department (RCC) which reports directly to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students). The RCC is responsible for: the administration and financial management of University operated residences; staff and resident training; and the development and dissemination across the group of policies, protocols and standards.

The University has ensured that student accommodation has remained a critical part of the University's offering for students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. The ANU is currently the only Australian university offering a guarantee of accommodation to all new undergraduate students commencing their first year at the ANU.

The ANU residences support and utilise a community development model. The professional and administrative staff of the residences work together with community members to generate programming that best addresses local needs and issues. The RCC also works at the broader level to support development of programs that are of value to all residences and to all ANU students.

The RCC works with all residences, regardless of their ownership and management structure, to ensure that our national University is able to provide a high quality residential experience within a diverse range of adult learning communities and lifestyle options.

Response from the Australian National University to the terms of reference

1. Current accommodation options for students enrolled in ACT tertiary education institutions providing higher education and VET programs;

The ANU owns and operates seven collegiate residences. The ANU also owns three lodges which are managed by a third party - UniLodge, with a fourth lodge to come online for the start of the 2012 academic year. The ANU is also affiliated with two private providers with their colleges located on the campus. These sites combined currently provide 4500 student beds. The ANU also currently provides collegiate accommodation for 190 students at three off campus sites which have been leased for this purpose for the 2011 academic year. Table 1 displays the break down of the current residences, numbers of students housed and lifestyle details.

Table 1- Current ANU residence details:

Residence	Management	Resident Numbers	Meals per week	Lifestyle	Main Population
Bruce Hall	ANU Owned & Operated	240	21 (included in tariff)	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
Bruce Hall Packard Wing	ANU Owned & Operated	78	Self-cater (+1 Bruce Hall meal p/w)	Studio Style Private Ensuite and Kitchen	Postgraduate
Burton & Garran Hall	ANU owned & operated	516	Self-cater	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
Burgmann College	ANU Affiliated	240	21 (included in tariff)	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
Burgmann College Postgraduate Village	ANU Affiliated	120	Self-cater (Incl Sunday Dinner)		Postgraduate
Fenner Hall	ANU Owned & Operated	527	Self-cater	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
Graduate House	ANU Owned & Operated	150	Self-cater (Incl Wednesday Dinner)	Studio Style Private Ensuite and Kitchen	Postgraduate
John XXIII College	ANU Affiliated	317	21 (included in tariff)	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
University House	ANU Owned & Operated	64	Self-cater	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Postgraduate
Ursula Hall	ANU Owned & Operated	206	21 (included in tariff)	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
Ursula Hall Laurus Wing	ANU Owned & Operated	220	Self-cater	Studio Style Private Ensuite and Kitchen	Postgraduate
Toad Hall	ANU Owned & Operated	227	Self-cater	Corridor Style Shared Facilities	Postgraduate
Davey Lodge, Kinloch Lodge & Warrumbul Lodge	ANU Owned Operated by UniLodge under management contract	1400	Self-cater	Single Studio Style with Private Ensuite and Kitchen Apartment style with Single Bedrooms and Shared Facilities	Undergraduate
External Sites Carotel, Lyneham Hall and UniGardens	Owned and Operated by External Parties. Pastoral and administrations support by ANU	190	Self Cater: Carotel UniGardens 14 meals per week: Lyneham Hall	Single Room with Shared facilities: Carotel Twin Room/ Studio Style: Lyneham Hall UniGardens	Undergraduate : Lyneham Hall UniGardens Postgraduate: Carotel
Only for 2011 Academic Year					

The ANU maintains and supports a diverse portfolio of student accommodation to better provide for the variety of expressed needs of the student clients. In our recent survey of students living in all residences several factors were reported as influential in accommodation based decision making. This survey achieved 533 responses across all residences. These factors are shown in Table 2:

Table 2 – Factors influencing the decision to remain in ANU On Campus Accommodation

Reason for Selecting to Remain in On Campus Accommodation	% of Respondents	Number of Respondents (Total = 533)
Proximity to campus	87.99	469
Being part of a community	76.17	406
Cost	73.36	391
Difficulty finding other accommodation	54.22	289
Learning & development opportunities	45.40	242
Pastoral and academic support	39.21	209
Parent/guardian preference	34.52	184
Other – most often specified as security/safety	16.70	89

Proximity to the campus facilities was rated as the top driver for students selecting to remain in residence. Several students stated that public transport difficulties made living further away more difficult. Living on campus also provided better access to the campus life and the many extension offerings provided for the university community each week. The second most highly rated driver was the sense of being part of a community. Many students stated that they saw residential life as an important part of their university experience. The ANU strongly agrees that the residential experience within a community of scholars provides ample opportunities for personal and professional development as well as providing added benefits of more effective transitions to tertiary education and higher retention rates within first year cohorts.

The cost of accommodation is another important driver of student accommodation choice. Students arrive with a range of financial capabilities and the ANU aims to maintain a spread of price points to help address financial ability. The cost factor may increase in importance over time as universities work to attract more students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The developing social focus on students who need to work extended hours in order to earn enough money to live at a reasonable standard may also drive the development of more very low cost accommodation options.

2. Models used in other jurisdictions to meet the accommodation needs of tertiary education students

The offerings available at the ANU reflect options available both nationally and internationally. By way of example in 2008 the University investigated a range of modular student accommodation available overseas. A delegation, including student representatives, visited two sites in Europe and as a

consequence of this exercise constructed the existing modular accommodation - The Laurus Wing of Ursula College.

The ANU residences currently offer a diverse range of accommodation styles– from traditional corridors of rooms with shared facilities and self catering all the way through to studio apartments with internal bathrooms and kitchens. Within these diverse physical lifestyle offerings, the ANU also provides a range of collegial communities from fully independent living with support for social connections, right through to involved adult learning communities providing academic, pastoral and social supports and events. This diversity of our available communities is one of the great strengths of the ANU residential system. We are able to offer a wide variety of successful models within a single institution, and therefore facilitate the flow of students between these communities as their needs develop and change.

3. Student experiences of current accommodation options in the ACT, including the experiences of local, interstate and international students.

While first hand student accounts of their experiences will best inform the Committee in regards to this point, there are some concerns to be raised in the broader sense.

The staff of RCC frequently respond to requests from students trying to gain access to university accommodation while they are experiencing difficulties in the private market housing. Most often these difficulties arise from students having entered into unsatisfactory housing agreements, landlords suddenly increasing rents, landlords introducing new charges for services and social issues developing within private shared living environments. The RCC works very hard to develop solutions with these students and every effort is made to provide university accommodation whenever possible. It would appear that many international students sign up for private housing prior to entering Australia and are often disappointed when they arrive. There is also a broad lack of understanding of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (ACT) (Residential Tenancies Act) and associated legislation and of tenants' rights in the private rental market.

4. Strategies adopted by ACT tertiary education institutions to meet student accommodation and welfare needs.

The ANU is committed to the developmental value of the residential experience. We utilise many strategies to provide both the physical facilities and the residential experience. Our current strategies include:

a) Availability and diversity of accommodation

The ANU has strived over several years to increase the number of beds available to students. Our aim is to be able to provide accommodation to all students who require or desire this experience. It is worth noting that for the past two years ANU has sourced, at considerable expense, off-site accommodation offerings which it has provided to students at costs benchmarked to its current on-campus offerings. As it transpired the majority

of demand for this accommodation came from International postgraduate students.

At present approximately 27% of the entire student body live in university accommodation. By February 2012 the ANU will have increased the numbers of available beds by 2290 over the past five years. This development has been based on statistical analysis of new student numbers and desired growth.

As noted in Table 1 above, the wider ANU accommodation offerings cover a range of price points and lifestyles. This diversity is critical when trying to address the needs of a varied student population. The selection of a particular residence/lifestyle/cost is driven by many factors which shift for each individual. By maintaining a wide span of offerings the ANU has been able to meet most student accommodation and experiential needs. Annual surveys have reported a high level of overall satisfaction with the ANU systems and community offerings.

Each residence maintains common spaces to facilitate social and academic contact. These facilities have developed within a framework that accommodates planned uses and organic re-development of these spaces to better address community needs.

b) Accessibility of accommodation

The ANU is one of very few universities that do not charge any application fees to prospective residents. This encourages prospective students to apply much earlier with over 400 students applying during the Open Day on August 28th in 2010. The RCC maintains a centralised online application system to facilitate a streamlined admissions process. This application system facilitates better flow planning within the residences.

All ANU residences maintain a population minimum of 50% international students. Residences also balance intake for gender and programs to ensure a diverse community. The RCC intends to explore equity based admissions and allocation systems during the second half of 2011.

Nevertheless, the University has in the last few years experienced more demand for accommodation than it can deliver. It has kept prices low, considerably lower than asked for equivalent services at other city universities. It has introduced policies aimed at encouraging students from outside the Canberra region to come to the ANU to study and has restricted accommodation availability to students coming from Canberra itself.

c) The Undergraduate Guarantee

The ANU provides a guarantee of accommodation for new students entering their first year of an undergraduate degree program at the University. This guarantee is valid for both non-local domestic and international students. This program has provided a strong drawcard for the ANU as it often removes the considerable stress of seeking suitable accommodation for these new students and their families.

To be eligible for the undergraduate accommodation guarantee students need to:

1. Complete the online accommodation application between set dates;
2. Apply to study in a full time undergraduate degree at the ANU;
3. Live outside the local ACT area (not living in the following postcodes: 0200, 2600-2612, 2614-2620, 2900-2914);
4. Domestic Students: Receive an academic offer from the ANU by the set date; or
5. International Students: Accept an academic offer by the date outlined in their academic offer;
6. Accept the accommodation offer within the stipulated timeframe (48 hours from date of accommodation offer).

d) Formation of the Residential and Campus Communities Department

In January 2011 the University formed the Residential and Campus Communities Department (RCC). This department was set up to provide centralised management and oversight of the various residences and the systems which work across the group. The RCC is tasked with the development of central policies and protocols which increases quality control and equity across the broader group. The RCC works across many platforms including driving better use of shared resources to produce better outcomes for wider populations within the residences. To emphasise its significance this department lies under the oversight of the Office of the Vice Chancellor.

The RCC is also responsible for supporting the development and pursuit of strategic accommodation objectives. This process is driven at the high level by a strategic committee comprising of stakeholders, student representatives and members of the executive.

The RCC also works to integrate the residences with the wider University community by organising University wide programmes such as the upcoming 2011 Diversity Week, by assisting the ongoing development of the various specialist learning communities which are unique to the ANU system and by linking with internal bodies/external agencies to better develop programmes for all students such as the current sexual assault program developed in partnership with the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

e) Community development and pastoral systems

All residences provide a level of pastoral care and community development. The professional staff drive these objectives while incorporating and strongly acknowledging the input of residents. Each residence has developed a slightly different character which adds to the breadth of choices available to prospective residents. Community development is greatly facilitated by the various student resident committees which function in most residences and act as a student government providing social linkage, access to many social events and to the inter-residence sports and arts competitions.

The pastoral systems function to provide a wide range of support from the local social level to critical incident management. Residential Scholars/Community Assistants/Senior Residents are available in all locations.

These students undertake specialised training in identifying issues, providing less complex support and making appropriate referrals. They also work to ensure that people within their designated area develop social connections and residence information. These residential scholars are coordinated by student Sub-Deans and Deputy Heads of Hall. Almost all residences have a live-in fulltime Deputy Head of Hall, or similar, who is responsible for the provision of pastoral and academic programming, after-hours incident management and supporting the various learning communities. The Head of Hall/Master/Principal provides leadership, general management of the Hall community and also addresses serious student matters. The Head and Deputy also work to maintain functional links with the various specialist service providers on the campus and with the academic colleges.

f) Academic support systems

Professional staff within the residences work to develop and maintain meaningful academic support systems based on current research and best practice. Main goals of these programs are to successfully support the transition from secondary school into the tertiary learning environment, and to help students experiencing academic issues to access support and eventually succeed. Each residence provides community based variations. Most residences review the grades of residents at least twice per year in order to pick up issues before they develop into major problems. A student who is identified through these processes is then offered a range of supports and mentoring within the residence and through the campus specialist services. The staff and student leaders also work to provide opportunities to connect new students with more advanced students studying the same discipline to facilitate social mentoring. This practice has proven to be very effective and appreciated by residents. Many of the roles supporting the academic development of the residential communities are held by students and this provides for further leadership and personal development opportunities.

Postgraduate and later year undergraduate students are supported by a broad offering of seminars and networking opportunities. The University is currently undertaking a project to develop best practices in regards to the effective support of postgraduate students. The findings of this project will then drive the praxis across the residences and in the broader University.

g) Student leadership, personal development and learning communities

The residences provide many meaningful opportunities for the development of leadership skills and deepening of self knowledge. Student Resident Committees are a critical part of the fabric of most residences. These groups are vital to the communication between the staff and students, intra-residence decision making, as well as providing the back bone of many social and sporting functions. These larger lead committees are often supported by smaller sub committees which further diversify the leadership opportunities.

The residences also provide many opportunities for the pursuit of deeper personal development through the support of one off student driven projects, attendance at learning community events and participating in inter-hall/campus based programming. The various specialist learning

communities provide an opportunity for deeper learning of specific subject areas often providing energetic debate from the edges of the subject material. The learning communities are unique to the ANU and aim to link current students/staff/emeritus faculty and community members who share an interest or passion. These communities extend the residential experience across into the broader University community.

The largest group of leadership opportunities are made available via the various roles that support the residential communities and their endeavours. These roles include:

- Senior Resident/Residential Scholars
- Community Assistants
- Academic Program Officers
- Learning Community Coordinators
- Canteen Coordinators

h) Reinforcing safety, discipline and wellbeing

The ANU residences utilise a 24 hour coverage system to support residents. In almost all residences, if the reception is closed, there will be a Duty Warden who receives calls requesting assistance. Many calls are prosaic requests for practical assistance with locked doors and access to facilities. The Duty Warden is critical to our support systems as it is also the first contact when critical or serious situations arise. They receive training in dealing with various matters and will proactively approach most situations with a strong consideration for safety of all involved. If a situation is estimated as serious the Duty Warden will contact the On Call Senior Officer for back up, or for that On Call person to attend and take over the management of the situation. The daily Duty Wardens are the Residential Scholars who perform this role on a rostered basis. The On Call back up person will be the Sub Dean/ Deputy Head/Head of Hall. All of these people are able to call in the University Security Service or Federal Police/ Ambulance as required.

If a serious issue, or discipline matter, is raised with the Duty Warden it is then addressed by the professional staff as soon as possible.

The residences each have a handbook which details the rules of the residence and supports and forms part of the Occupancy Agreement which details the agreement between the resident and the accommodation provider. Any breaches of the rules of the residence, or the University, are dealt with by the professional staff and may be referred up to the Director or the University Executive.

5. Anticipated demand for student accommodation in the ACT in light of the Commonwealth and Territory Government's priorities for the education sector

The ANU expects that demand for good quality, secure, well located and affordable student accommodation will continue to increase in the future. This demand will be partly driven by the various institutions' student targets. Demand may also be driven in the future by government policy such as a possible future requirement of guaranteeing accommodation spaces to international postgraduate students. The ANU is committed to working

positively with both Commonwealth and Territory Governments to develop appropriate local solutions to address future demand. The University is very well placed to work with authorities and funding bodies should any public funds become available to enable further development and provision of residential spaces for ANU students.

6. Coordination and planning measures adopted by the ACT Government to meet anticipated needs in student accommodation

The ANU supports the development of improved appropriate planning measures to increase access to safe, economical, suitable and well located accommodation for students. The ANU also supports the development of student housing standards and planning measures that would strongly discourage inappropriate and poor quality developments.

7. General factors influencing availability and access to appropriate accommodation for the core demographic group (18-25 year olds)

General factors that influence the access and availability to appropriate accommodation include:

- Better promotion is needed of the Residential Tenancies Act and the processes available to address tenancy issues in order to maintain current housing
- A very tight rental market in areas close to tertiary institutions appears to lead to highly selective application processes which often works against equitable access to housing for students
- Developments close to tertiary institutions appear to target higher end investment clients making the resulting high rental prices unaffordable for most students, or which may force multiple occupancy to lower individual rent costs.
- Current limitations of the public transport system inhibit access to less expensive housing locations
- Detailed real estate information for non local students available on the internet
- An increasing number of students are now reported to be living in poverty and experiencing difficulty in finding employment, or being required to work a large number of low paid hours which results in time poverty in relation to study needs. The University has recently made a submission to the Federal Government Student Income Support Inquiry which includes comments on the issue of accommodation affordability. This submission is attached.

8. Any other relevant matter

Occupancy Agreements

The ANU has developed a fair and clear Occupancy Agreement used for residents within ANU owned and operated residences. These agreements have served the ANU and its communities well. It is hoped that this style and type of agreement will remain valid and enforceable under any possible future changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and that consultation with ANU

occurs prior to the implementation of any changes to occupancy agreement requirements which might affect the University community.

Additional material:

ANU Accommodation Basic Information Page
<http://accom.anu.edu.au/UAS/176.html>

ANU Financial Assistance
<http://accom.anu.edu.au/UAS/182.html>

ANU Graduate Residences Information:
<http://accom.anu.edu.au/UAS/978.html>

ANU Learning Communities
<http://www.anu.edu.au/learningcommunities/>

ANU Undergraduate Guarantee information:
<http://accom.anu.edu.au/UAS/977/200.html>

ANU Undergraduate Residences Information:
<http://accom.anu.edu.au/UAS/977/207.html>

Dear Professor Dow,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Review of Student Income Support. My comments are positioned around the current suite four interrelated schemes, summarized as follows:

- **Living allowance schemes:**(Youth Allowance, Abstudy, Austudy) currently worth up to \$474.90 per fortnight (Abstudy) but more probably \$388.70 per fortnight for a non-Abstudy student living away from home;
- **Rental assistance scheme:** with a minimum threshold of \$103 per week of rent before any assistance is available and reaching maximum assistance of \$116 per week when rent reaches \$258pw;
- **Relocation scholarship:** \$4,124 pa in the first year and \$1,031pa in subsequent years;
- **Annual start-up scholarship:** \$2,194pa.; and

In addition students can earn up to \$400 per fortnight without affecting their income support, with a student income bank of up to \$10,000 to enable smoothing of income and benefit peaks and troughs.

All of these schemes are subject to means testing either directly or indirectly because of their relationship to the living allowance and the location of home address and study institutions. All have variable rates of reduction depending on personal income and assets of the student. Youth Allowance, the most likely living allowance for many students is subject to means testing on parental income and assets in Australia and overseas.

With the above in mind, there are three major areas for comment: complexity, equity, and manageability. Complexity deters those who lack familiarity and facility with bureaucratic systems and challenges the accounting and financial skills of those with such familiarity and facility. It is most likely that many low-SES and rural/regional students will fail to deal effectively this complexity.

Under the present situation, should a student succeed in getting to university and find work to supplement their benefits, it becomes important to actively manage the work income and benefit income (reducible on a variable scale) along with the student income bank in order to avoid risk of potential fraud and repayment issues. Additionally, should an independent student accumulate savings above a certain threshold (\$2,999) from work or other sources, such as the payment of relocation and/or start-up scholarship

components, this asset can defer benefit payments. This creates an additional level of complexity and a potential trap for students.

This complexity also works against equity. Wealthy families and high income earners are frequently able to legally structure their taxable income and assets. Low-SES families and low income households are less able to structure their taxable income or their assets. The concept of “independence” is similarly differentially open to manipulation. It is also possible that students from low-SES families and regional/rural families will have limited access to the advice and assistance to accurately self-assess their eligibility, while higher income groups, particularly in metropolitan areas, will have greater access to such advice and assistance to find creative paths through the criteria and establish eligibility.

Once these initial hurdles are overcome, the disposable weekly and daily amounts of benefits, arguably, are insufficient for needs. By way of illustration, I present the following scenario for a student enrolled in a four year bachelor’s degree program, who fully qualifies on all assistance with the two scholarship components (relocation and start-up) are averaged over the period to give a weekly amount. This provides an approximate total assistance package of \$387pw.

At ANU, basic self-catered residential accommodation is available at \$164 per week. An estimate of the rent assistance for this is \$55 per week. Using the average total assistance of \$387 minus approximately \$75pw of the averaged relocation and start-up scholarships the amount available for food, drink, cleaning, incidentals and clothing, once accommodation is paid for, reduces to approximately \$203pw or \$29 per day. It is worth noting that ANU is not the most expensive residential campus in Australia. Under the present conditions students can undertake paid employment, however it is by no means certain that students moving to Canberra (or any other new city) will immediately or easily find suitable part-time work to supplement benefits.

In summary tight criteria coupled with complex applications and variable benefit interactions do not encourage students and families from low-SES and regional/rural backgrounds into higher education. While the students may have the academic capability and family moral and emotional support to enter university, accessing benefits appears to be an obstacle course with failure and potential penalties looming at many points.

Based on the above analysis we believe that student income support must be simple to access, sufficient for needs and easy to manage alongside study and work and make the following suggestions:

- Complexity be reduced both at the application stage and in the ongoing administration, especially as related to parental income and assets;
- The funding package needs to be sufficient to meet the needs of students once at a higher education institution, i.e.;
 - rental assistance needs to be sufficient to actually assist students live in institutional residences and other suitably located and appointed accommodation; and

- living allowances need to actually provide sufficient funds for self-catering with nutritious food, for transport costs and for clothing and health maintenance;
- The funding package needs to be more easily managed by students once at a higher education institution, preferably with less complex interaction between components, i.e:
 - fix rental assistance without variation or thresholds;
 - enable amortisation of relocation and start-up scholarships and their rolling into benefit packages as a student choice;
 - enable students to elect whether to have a student income bank or a higher penalty free threshold for earnings;
 - have a single rate of variation for earnings affecting benefits at a single higher threshold;
 - student living allowances and other benefits should be non-taxable; and
 - remove the asset test on independent students or raise it to a realistic level to encourage saving towards such things as computers, communications, transport, etc.

Under present arrangements, much of the administrative and assessment effort is effectively on potential students and their families. Depending on the extent to which this assessment work is duplicated within Centrelink, there may be some administrative savings from simplification.

Realistically, if the Government wants more low-SES and regional/rural students to participate in and complete a higher education program, it will cost more for income support for such students. The more tightly drawn and finely delimited the targeting, the more there appears to be scope for perverse disincentives for low-SES and regional and rural students against even applying for assistance.

