

CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY STUDENT ASSOCIATION INC
SUBMISSION INTO STUDENT ACCOMMODATION –



Current accommodation options in the ACT for students enrolled at CIT (international and regional)

- **CIT's Residential Accommodation** (on and off campus) has 76 rooms in total, there are 32 international students and 40 regional students currently living in these resses. All of CIT's Resident Accommodation is fully booked and this has been the experience for several years. CIT Resses are located at:
Bruce Campus (48 rooms)
Monterey Apartments, Reid (18 rooms)
Bowman House, Hackett has (10 rooms)
- In 2011, there are 7 international students in homestay, of which 2 are under 18 and therefore placed under guardianship. In 2010, CIT placed 23 international students into homestay.
- CIT also places approximately 30 – 60 international students from study group tours into homestays per year for short term stays. They currently have 7 students on a waiting list. Of all students in Resses, 42 are male and 30 are female. CIT Bruce Resses are \$155 pw and Monterey and Bowman are \$145, full board homestay is \$260 per week.
- Currong Apartments, Reid currently has 35 CIT students, and of the 152 on the waiting list 27 students are from CIT, 77 ANU and 48 UC. Of the total number of students living in Currong Apartments 90-95% would be international students.
- Havelock House has not provided statistics on CIT students at this point in time.
- Arscott House has less than 10 CIT students in semester one, 2011. It is managed by the UC Student Association. Applications are online and returning students get priority. Vacant accommodation is offered on a first come first served basis. Arscott House offers full board (2 meals a day) for \$265 per week for one semester or \$240 a week for full year.
- Private Rental Market (\$150 – \$250 for a room in 3 bedroom house)

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

- WA – proposal that the WA government intends to subsidise newly built housing based on the individual student needs (student pays so much and the govt pays so much)
- Commercial ventures between hotel chains and local developers investing in Student Accommodation (ANU, UniLodge, UC Village)
- Private Investors in the market subletting houses
- Unilodge/Campus Living Villages Models

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CIT Student experiences of current accommodation options in the ACT (local, interstate and international)

- Private rental market in the ACT is increasingly unaffordable for students.
- Students are moving further away from the city as inner city private apartment redevelopment puts the market in a higher rental bracket
- Students prefer to live in the CBD where employment opportunities are greater
- International Students and regional students are moving over the border to Queanbeyan (noticeably in 2010/2011) where accommodation is marginally cheaper, but public transport costs are a disincentive (\$8 per day return bus fares to the City on a student discount)
- Some International Students choose to live in overcrowded accommodation to reduce the cost of rent (in some group house arrangements lounge, dining rooms, corridors are rented out as bedrooms)
- Students prefer apartments because of reduced maintenance responsibilities
- Students prefer living closer to the campus to reduce transport costs and travel time (Deane's expensive and ACTION infrequent or unreliable)
- Students under 18 are not permitted to live in CIT residences as guardianship is required so CIT places them in Homestay. Some students under 18 cannot afford to live in homestay as it's more expensive than other accommodation (home stay is approx \$240 full board per week)
- Younger regional students or international students new to Canberra do not have local referees for real estate agents which is problematic and places them further down the list for selection
- CIT Apprentices on block release (e.g. 3 weeks at a time, or one day a week, or one week a month) from the region have lots of problems securing temporary accommodation. Many stay at the YHA (no security for their belongings and tools) hotels, caravan parks or 'couch surfing' with friends. They are shocked how expensive Canberra is to live and stay compared to regional country towns.
- CIT students under the age of 18 have difficulty in every aspect of securing accommodation (if they have no supporting family, they cannot provide a guardian or guarantees on rent).
- CIT students have reported that Havelock House is unsuitable and has inflexible share arrangements for groups (financial share arrangements complicated, eg one bill for electricity to be shared 5 ways among tenants who are transient). The long term tenants at Havelock House and the transient younger student tenant are not compatible
- Currong Apartments Management is outsourced to the Southside Caravan Park and they are difficult to contact and slow to respond to enquiries. Since Currong Apartments commenced housing students, it has been full to capacity with a waiting list continuously of over 100 students, mostly ANU students who seem to always get first options on all accommodation.

Strategies adopted by CIT to meet student accommodation needs

- A CITSA representative and a CIT representative participated in the Chief Ministers Working Party into Student Accommodation 2004-2007. This Working Party looked at short term solutions and did not have a brief to discuss the long term alternatives for student

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accommodation. Current status of the group unknown. CITSA's observations of the Working Group was that it appeared to benefit the ANU more than other institutions (i.e. ANU had first student access and knowledge of the ACT Government's decision regarding access to Currong Apartments, and Wattle Lodge before it was discussed at the Working Party).

- CIT purpose built accommodation in 2004 on the Bruce Campus, housing 48 international/regional students to supplement the other hostel accommodation (Arscott House, Hackett House, Bowman House, Currong Apartments).
- 2010 viability study of building accommodation on Reid Campus (CIT Staff member: Doug Brooks) where the majority of international students study.
- The CMFEU, CIT and CITSA have been in discussions regarding temporary housing of regional apprentices by CMFEU members.

Co-ordination and planning measures adopted by the ACT Government to meet anticipated needs in student accommodation

- Chief Ministers Working Party into Student Accommodation in the ACT (chaired by Dean Terrell) enabled access to DHCS owned Currong Apartments which was regarded as a short term measure. The terms of reference for this working party did not cover long term solutions. It was apparent that the long term solution was handed back to the educational institutions to solve. CIT, at the time, was not in a position financially to resolve its accommodation dilemma. This continues to be the case as it is beholden to the ACT Govt for funding.
- ANU was given land access to build student accommodation on the University perimeter (City West). The Federal Government approved ANU to build the new dwellings through the National Rental Affordability Scheme. The student accommodation is rented at 20% below market rent.
- In 2010/11 CIT investigated the feasibility of building substantial student accommodation on the Reid Campus. The proposal was put to Government in May this year to but was declined.

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

- Location – students are a transient group and during their studies prefer to locate as close to their place of study as possible to avoid additional costs (car, transport, time)
- Affordability – subsidised housing is preferred e.g. similar to Currong Apartments, but group share is a trend because it's cheaper
- Transport – bus routes and timetables influence choice as not all CIT Campuses on major bus routes
- Flexible Lease arrangements – international and regional students may go home in the breaks, sometimes for up to 8 weeks so they need to be able to vacate their accommodation temporarily.
- Lack of referees and references for renting from the private sector
- Under the age of 18 year olds have a very difficult time.

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In summary, CIT has never had sufficient access to student accommodation, and it has been obvious that other tertiary institutions, in particular, ANU and UC, have been given priority over the TAFE sector. With the current discussions regarding a merger with UC, it is very unlikely that the order of priority will change.

International students will always get priority because they are full fee paying; regional students will always be disadvantaged by the cost and relocation from their home town (they also are disadvantaged by Centrelink compared to students enrolled in degrees who get relocation scholarships); apprentices on block release will always find it expensive when they pay daily hotel rates and have limited access to cooking facilities.

When CIT students seek accommodation assistance from the CIT Student Association, we are forced to push them back out into the open rental market. This has resulted in students temporarily living in cars, staying overnight in the library, 'couch surfing' with friends or classmates, returning home to regional NSW until they secure affordable accommodation, staying in hotels and paying bills on credit cards (NSW apprentices are subsidised \$28 per night by the NSW Govt scheme VTAS).

Since 2005, CITSA has been involved in many forums to lobby for more affordable student accommodation. For the last few years, we have been unable to assist students with accommodation requests as the rental market was full. We referred students to all possible websites, including ANU Housing, UC Housing, Allhomes and Gumtree. Students were in long queues at viewings for share accommodation and in some desperate instances, CITSA housed students temporarily at the YHA or with CIT teachers. There is no doubt that ANU and UC dominate the market for student accommodation and are in a position to respond in some way to their own created demands. CIT students have always been at the mercy of the private rental market which we know is expensive. The Private Market Rental charges, more often than not, exceed full independent Youth Allowance (\$175 per week) and when there is no choice of cheaper rental, what should they do? Not study, go back to regional NSW?

We welcome the opportunity to share our views with the ACT Government and look forward to the short-term accommodation strategy in December 2011. We ask that the TAFE sector not be excluded from the Tertiary discussion as it has in previous forums and that this submission provides some evidence for a serious discussion.

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Canberra Institute of Technology Student Association Inc

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