



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
YOUTH AFFAIRS**

(Reference: [Accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT](#))

Members:

**MS A BRESNAN (The Chair)
MR J HANSON (The Deputy Chair)
MS M PORTER**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2011

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr B Lloyd (Ph: 6205 0137)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

WITNESSES

ANDREWS, MR BRUCE , Director, Residential and Campus Communities, Australian National University	73
DEANE, PROFESSOR ELIZABETH , Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students), Australian National University	73
DUNKLEY, MS JENNIFER , Policy and Development Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT	52
GINNIVAN, MS GEORGIA RUTH , Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative	42
GINNIVAN, MS LEAH , Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative	42
LIU, MS LOUISE , Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative	42
LOVE, MS SUSAN , Campus Operations Manager, Australian Catholic University.....	61
McARDLE, PROFESSOR PATRICK , Campus Dean, Australian Catholic University.....	61
PROCTOR, MR DALLAS , Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative	42
ROBERTSON, MS EMMA , Director, Youth Coalition of the ACT	52
STAYNER, MR THOMAS , Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative.....	42

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Amended 9 August 2011

The committee met at 2.00 pm.

GINNIVAN, MS GEORGIA RUTH, Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative

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PROCTOR, MR DALLAS, Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative

STAYNER, MR THOMAS, Director, Canberra Student Housing Cooperative

THE CHAIR: I would like to welcome you all here today to this hearing of the inquiry by the education committee into the accommodation needs of tertiary students in the ACT. We are hearing from the Canberra Student Housing Cooperative. Thank you for coming along. I want to draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the table in front of you. Have you all read that and are you aware of the implications of it? Thank you. I will draw your attention to a couple of things in it. I want to emphasise that the proceedings are being broadcast and everything is being recorded. I just want you to know that when you say something it is being broadcast and recorded.

Before we go to questions from the committee, I would like to invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr Stayner: Sure. Dallas Proctor is going to give the opening statement.

Mr Proctor: We are all ANU students and we represent a broad group of student members. We thank the committee for their time today and for the invitation to address the inquiry.

The co-op's primary concern is the structure of the Canberra housing market, and particularly the alarming lack of options at the affordable end of the spectrum. As a student, you have essentially got three choices on campus. You have got your catered colleges, at around \$310 per week, a non-catered hall, which starts at \$163 per week, or apartment-style living, which is priced in between those. For a typical student who is earning around \$415 per week—that takes into account youth allowance and about 15 hours of work—this means that they are spending 40 to 75 per cent of their income on accommodation. If you are lucky, there is also the option of a share house, which starts at around \$150 a week, but this style of living has its own problems, such as facing intense competition from professionals and families and also being subject to a market where demand completely outstrips supply at the moment.

Over the past few years we have seen the UniLodge model heralded as the future of student accommodation, with over 2,000 new beds being built at the ANU. The cheapest room in the newest building, not including utilities, is \$191 per week. So when you consider the fact that a purpose-built, partially government funded building completely surpasses the private rental market rate of around \$150 or \$160 a week, on affordability, I think really significant questions need to be raised.

From these prices, we are left to infer that the ANU assumes that students have parents or other people who can and should pick up the cost of their rent. Even if we were to accept this proposition in some cases, we have to question what would happen

when students do not have parents who can help. This is particularly important for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, who the ANU are trying to target at the moment.

What solution are we putting forward? Our ultimate goal is to operate a building that houses between 20 and 40 students and, as a condition of residency, each student would have to put in about five hours of work a week on domestic tasks. Where we see on-campus accommodation having cleaners, cooks and receptionists, a co-op is entirely operated by its student residents. We would seek to keep costs as low as possible in order to keep rents at market-leading levels.

This is great not only for affordability but also for bringing residents together. The ideal of a strong and supportive community is central to the cooperative ethos and has flow-on benefits in terms of a basis for outreach into the wider community and also for the support of disadvantaged students who live in the co-op.

Our business plan sets out four main objectives: secure and affordable accommodation, innovative living environment, democratically run and external engagement. We want the co-op to embrace a broad range of other ideals and particularly emphasise a focus on environmental sustainability for the building. All of our strategies are underpinned by a desire to become a true home away from home for each and every resident.

Why is this a good model to aspire to? Firstly, we know that it works. We know that in Sydney uni, there is the STUCCO Cooperative, which has been operating successfully for over 20 years. The housing cooperative in Berkeley, California houses over 1,000 students in 20 different properties across the city.

Secondly, the principles behind the cooperative are sound. Although students have a lot of time on their hands, class schedules mean that this time is not often conducive to paid employment, so doing your own maintenance, cooking and cleaning makes perfect sense. Also, it is very efficient. We think there are significant economies of scale to be gained from being more efficient with our housing stock.

Although it might sound strange, this same logic would be applicable to a housing cooperative. If you can build a comfortable residence for 40 students on the same land that used to be occupied by two three-bedroom residences, there is obviously significant scope to offer much lower rents than are offered at present with the existing housing stock. And unlike professionals, we do not aspire to having European appliances, brand new buildings, pristine carpets or secure car parking. We are seeing that most new housing stock that is being built in Canberra is not appropriate for students with more modest needs and for whom it is not as important to have luxurious fittings and the like.

Where do we go from here? In the short term, we are working with Havelock House to accommodate students in one of their seven-bedroom apartments and we are using this as a stepping stone. So once we have effectively established our capacity to run or manage an apartment, we aim to seek assistance from the ACT government in obtaining land and/or property.

We are also very mindful of the importance of a self-sustaining proposal. Ideally, the way that it would work is that we would have access to a line of credit and be able to use the rents that we would get from the building to pay it off over an extended period of time. This is exactly what they did with STUCCO in Sydney uni in the early 1990s. That has been completely paid off now and that is what we would like to replicate here in Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will go to the first question. You gave the example of the Sydney STUCCO. Is that the only example in Australia of this sort of cooperative model working? Have there been any recent ones?

Ms L Ginnivan: That is one of the only ones that we are aware of that houses exclusively students but there are a lot of community housing cooperatives. There are a couple in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: In terms of a housing co-op, we have got community housing, and housing cooperatives are slightly different things. Is that the only student-run one that—

Ms L Ginnivan: Yes, that is the only one that is affiliated with the university. There are many other students living in low income cooperatives around Australia, obviously, but that was specifically set up. I lived in a cooperative in California. At the University of California, Berkeley they have around 1,500 students living in cooperatives and the rent there is much cheaper than what is available privately. So that is a very successful model at that university. Quite a few big universities across the States have them.

THE CHAIR: The CIT Student Association came to the last hearing and they said that from 2004 to 2007 there was a student accommodation working party and under that a type of cooperative—not quite essentially that—had been established and that was largely based in the Currong apartments.

With respect to some of the problems they had there, now that community housing providers have to be accredited, that led to that sort of model at the time, where it was about student accommodation, ceasing to exist. Have you looked at issues around that? Because community housing providers have to be accredited, is that something you would have to do as a cooperative?

Ms L Ginnivan: In the short term, because we do not have a place to provide this accommodation at the moment, we are working with the ANU and Havelock House to cover that base. Obviously that is something that we will need to look into when we begin to find more properties to manage.

THE CHAIR: You said you are working with Havelock. Are you going to be coming under Havelock's accreditation and working under that?

Ms L Ginnivan: Yes.

MR HANSON: How many have you got in the co-op at the moment? You said that you have this set up under Havelock; how many people have you got together at the

moment as part of this cooperative?

Mr Stayner: We are not housing any students at the moment. We have got a group. There are five directors, those who are here today, and we have got over 30 people in our—

MR HANSON: So there are 30 people who are ready to go and have signed up to the model, if you were to progress it?

Mr Stayner: Yes. Obviously people are all living somewhere now, so there are transitional issues there. But we have a large pool of interested people and active members.

MR HANSON: I want to explore the funding model a bit more. Could you go through the details? Are you prepared to take out loans or how would you envisage that actually working?

Mr Proctor: Obviously it is quite difficult for us to get a loan. With a cooperative, as security for a bank, it does not seem to us that they could sell it off really easily, so getting a loan would depend on the future rent being a security, which poses quite significant problems for us. We definitely need an institution to either guarantee the loan or to offer us the funding. I think it would work. I think we would be able to pay off a loan at market rates. That would be kind of touch and go. It would be quite helpful if we had, say, land to start with because then we would definitely be able to pay off a building at market rates.

Mr Stayner: Do you want to talk about how they did it in Sydney—how STUCCO was started?

Mr Proctor: Okay. My dad was actually one of the founding people at STUCCO. What they did was to get the university and the New South Wales department of housing—I think the department of housing bought the land. It was an old glassworks that was converted in Newtown, which was quite close to the University of Sydney. The university gave them a loan to do the building. They engaged an architect, who we are still in contact with, actually, who was quite keen to help us out if possible. They have gradually paid that off through the rents, but the land is still owned by the department of housing and they have not had to pay that off.

MR HANSON: So you really need support from the government, the ANU and others to get this rolling?

Mr Proctor: I think so.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Just a couple of questions. Firstly, student accommodation runs at around what—7,000? There are about 5,000 beds at ANU, there are about 2,000 at CIT and you are proposing to add 20 to 40. That does not seem really significant in the overall scheme of things.

Ms Liu: That is obviously just the starting point. We want to develop it further. As Leah said, in Berkeley they house over 1,000 students. Obviously at the moment we do not have anything to build on, so 20 to 40 would be ideal in the short term, a year or two. Following from that, we hope that the co-op will continue to build and grow as part of the ANU and develop further. Hopefully, if we have future developments in other properties, we will be able to house more students.

Mr Proctor: I think that a lot of the existing options are really good for the people who live there, but we really want to focus on a certain portion of the market—that is, people who require affordable housing. I think that a co-op could go a long way to bridge that kind of gap between, say, social housing provided by the government and then the lowest on-campus accommodation at Fenner and B&G, which is \$163 a week.

DR BOURKE: But in your economic model the only way that is going to be achieved is with a large government subsidy.

Mr Proctor: If the government hold on to the land then they are not exactly subsidising it because they retain ownership of that asset and we would pay for the building on the land.

DR BOURKE: But there is an opportunity cost there for the government of the land that you are asking to be given to you.

Mr Proctor: Yes, but the government does hold a lot of land. I do not really understand the economics of it, I suppose. It obviously needs further investigation. For example, the New South Wales government, with STUCCO, gave them some money for a feasibility study. Even something like that we would be looking at.

THE CHAIR: Anything further, Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: I have one final question. Do any of your board of directors have any experience in managing housing or running a property as a landlord, perhaps, or in rental management?

Mr Stayner: No, we do not. We are all students currently, which is why part of our initial plan is to work with organisations such as Havelock and other community housing accredited groups so that we can build up that experience and credibility.

MR DOSZPOT: We have got nothing against those guys. I think you were here representing another group last week. We are still trying to come to grips with understanding what sort of unmet need there is. Can you elaborate on that a bit? You say you have got about 20 to 40 prospective people, but is there a bigger need that is out there that can be identified?

Ms L Ginnivan: I can have a go at that. Some of the big issues that the ANU and some ANU students face at the moment are when people move out of residences. Accessibility to the rental market is quite difficult for students to get into when they are applying for a house with a group of friends or people that they know from university. That is one of the big demographics that we are looking at with this. Moving out of college or hall for the first time and into the community is a pretty

challenging step for a lot of students to make, particularly in second or third years of university.

We are looking at people who would normally be renting, perhaps, but would struggle to try and do that, which I think a lot of us have had experience with. A problem with renting is the insecurity of it. Most people who rent are looking at having to get off the lease in a year's time, move again and find another house. That is a very disruptive process to go through every year or every six months as a student. That is another area where we think there is a lot of unmet demand for longer term, stable and affordable housing, which is not really provided.

MR DOSZPOT: I am sorry, if I can just interrupt you for a second. Why is it difficult to get longer terms of rental? Why will people not give you longer terms of rental? You can get two-year rentals and 18-month rentals, can you not—or is there a problem with students applying for long-term rental?

Mr Stayner: I have never actually heard of anyone on a longer than one-year lease as a student. In my own experience, the group I was applying for houses with was only ever able to get a six-month lease and the house was being demolished later. Often you are out-competed by people who have higher incomes and who have a longer rental history. So the best you can get are the short-term leases.

Mr Proctor: A lot of the houses that students move into are the bottom of the bottom of the housing market. We are talking about three-bedroom houses in O'Connor and Turner renting at \$450 a week where the landlord is actively looking at opportunities all the time to demolish them and build something better. Students cannot afford anything that is there for the long term.

MR DOSZPOT: So the landlords want you to take shorter leases. I guess, as students, you do not know how long you are going to be there so you want some ability to get out. I think that answers the question. I am sorry, I interrupted you.

Ms L Ginnivan: That is okay. Just to recap, it is about affordability, stable housing and sometimes home in the community as well, which we have talked about a bit in our submission. If you just move out into a rental property with one or two other people it does not really necessarily provide such a great experience to study and have an environment that is conducive to the university experience. We want to create something that does that as well.

Ms G Ginnivan: If I could also touch on that. One of the unmet needs that we are seeing with the big projects such as UniLodge is that sense of community and that sense of student spirit and student culture being fostered within those communities. While those projects house a lot of people, which is great to meet the demand, at the same time there is also a demand for students to be involved in each other's lives and to have some kind of camaraderie on campus. In terms of our project, we would like to meet that need of creating a place where people can get to know each other and work together and fostering an environment of community learning and living.

MR DOSZPOT: One of you mentioned the difficulty with getting guarantors to come in and assist you with guaranteeing the lease, I guess. If you are talking about a

commercial proposition as well, could the two universities not act as guarantors? It is to their benefit to have students domiciled in good surroundings so they can continue their studies. Have the universities been approached to see whether they would guarantee, which would not mean any outlay? I guess they are taking a bit of a risk on making sure that those units are filled, but if there was a shortage there would not be much of a risk, I should not think.

Mr Stayner: I am not completely across this, but I understand that the ANU at least—I think the accommodation service—provide that, for people going under a private lease, they will sign off as a guarantor on students applying for a house. That is something to look into. But there is still the issue that, when real estate agents look at the forms, they see that three people with full-time jobs have a higher income versus these students who are on Centrelink or whatever. Even with the guarantee, there are still other issues that need to be met.

Mr Proctor: In regards to guaranteeing a loan, I think the ANU are quite concerned because they have built 2,000 of these apartments. They are scared that if they were to give us support in some ways people would rather live in the cooperative rather than in UniLodge, which would generate a loss on their commercial returns. I think that is an area of concern for them that we have heard.

MR DOSZPOT: So they do not want to create competitors, which is understandable. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Just on that, and then I have a question of my own. You said earlier in your answer to Mr Doszpot—and your submission talked about guarantors—that you would be looking for a larger institution, like, presumably, the university. Have you actually had discussions with them about whether that is something they would be willing to do? I am wondering whether those discussions have actually occurred.

Mr Proctor: Yes, we had quite an extended discussion. Can I talk about them, though?

THE CHAIR: I appreciate if you cannot; that is fine.

Mr Proctor: It was quite an informal discussion, but it was quite extended. We have gone through the things. That is how we got put onto Havelock House, with the idea that we would develop a bit of experience managing property before we were to go into a big project. We are also in discussions with the endowments officer at ANU and other places in the university.

Ms L Ginnivan: The ANU definitely recognise the need for more affordable housing. They have been aware of our work on this project since early last year, I would say. I feel there has been a bit of buck passing between us and various ACT government people—not the government, but ACT Housing and other branches of community housing organisations in Canberra. We have just been trying to figure out who would be the best group to help us with it. We do not necessarily want to be exclusively for ANU students. We are prepared to open it up. That is the way that it started.

THE CHAIR: That probably relates to the question I was going to ask you. In your

submission you talked about student or campus accommodation becoming the domain of wealthy families and that you would be targeting people that need affordable housing. If you were to have this model, presumably you would get more people applying for the units you had. From the examples you have got, would there be criteria to determine some sort of eligibility criteria? There will probably be people in that medium bracket that will still look for something like this. I am just wondering if that is something that you have thought about.

Mr Stayner: Yes, we certainly have. In our constitution, I believe, we sketched out a framework for how we would select residents. It does include income. It also includes a contribution to the cooperative community and other things like that.

THE CHAIR: When you say “income”, that would be determined as being a high-needs group or—

Mr Stayner: Yes. As an affordable housing organisation, we would be looking to help people who need it the most.

THE CHAIR: Sure. Would there be any—this might be in your constitution as well—restrictions on how long people would be able to live there? Is that something which has occurred in some of the other models?

Ms L Ginnivan: We can definitely get this to you. It has been a little while since we revisited what our criteria were. We thought that once someone had graduated, we might have a small grace period and then they would have to move on. Obviously, it is not meant to be a place for life but a place for people who are on low incomes. That would definitely be a consideration. If someone went part time and was working a lot, it would obviously make them ineligible as well.

THE CHAIR: So if someone was working as well and generating an income—

Ms L Ginnivan: If someone was earning more than a certain threshold, yes.

MR HANSON: So what is your next step? A business plan? Have you got to that level of maturity with it yet? At the moment it seems like it is an idea and concept that has moved along a bit and you have had discussions, but are you going to put together a proposal to submit to the ANU? Where do you go with your next step?

Mr Proctor: We do have a business plan but it is not a feasibility study so it does not have hard figures in there. The most important thing for us at the moment is to identify opportunities that we can target a proposal towards, whether it is land that we can possibly buy or something tangible that we could target something towards and lobby for. But in the meantime it is about securing some more properties like Havelock House, and I think that will help us quite a lot.

MR HANSON: What is your deal with Havelock? What is the specific arrangement?

Mr Proctor: They have said that they have a seven-bedroom apartment and they would like us to find the tenants for them and then we can set the house rules, I suppose, and try and run it like a cooperative.

MR HANSON: When does that start?

Ms L Ginnivan: We are still negotiating that.

MR HANSON: Would that be a test case so that you could then build your business case and your proposal?

Mr Proctor: At least for the rules that run the house.

THE CHAIR: So it would be the rules that run the house, rather than the contributions—

Mr Proctor: The community dynamic rather than the capital and all the financial things for the buildings.

MR HANSON: Do you select who goes in?

Mr Stayner: Yes, but again it is in the early stages and we have not formalised anything.

DR BOURKE: With regard to the people living there, would they be tenants or occupants?

Ms L Ginnivan: It is an occupancy agreement.

DR BOURKE: So you would be using an occupancy agreement. Why would you use that instead of a tenancy agreement?

Ms L Ginnivan: That is what Havelock House uses.

DR BOURKE: But why would you choose to use that within your cooperative?

Ms L Ginnivan: Under the cooperative that we will be running in this apartment, Havelock House uses the occupancy agreement, not a tenancy agreement, so we are abiding—

DR BOURKE: Yes, I understand that.

Ms L Ginnivan: by their program.

DR BOURKE: What I am talking about is the cooperative that you want to establish. Would you be using tenancy agreements or would you be using occupancy agreements?

Ms L Ginnivan: Do you mean in the longer term?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Ms L Ginnivan: We have not decided that yet. It is hypothetical because we do not

have a property of which we would be the landlords yet.

DR BOURKE: What do you perceive to be the advantages in running a cooperative as to whether you had tenancy agreements versus occupancy agreements?

Ms L Ginnivan: We have not investigated that yet. We have not made a final decision.

Mr Stayner: When we were putting our constitution together and when we were incorporating last year, we did get advice from Peter Quinton. He is the registrar of cooperatives in the ACT. So we did get advice on that, but we would have to revisit that to confirm whether we are going for the occupancy or the tenancy option.

THE CHAIR: Do STUCCO in New South Wales have a particular model that they use?

Mr Proctor: I do not know. Once we have something tangible then we can decide these things. I think we are not that far down the track yet.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate that. We will go to one final question, from Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: The Havelock House one is a non-acquisition type proposal; is that correct? With the acquisition plans that you keep alluding to, is that a firm proposal that you want to go with? I am not quite sure whether you are looking for a grant of land from the government. Are you looking for a grant of money to build? Can you explain that a little more?

Mr Stayner: We are keeping options open. Both of those options that you mentioned would be ones that we would consider. It depends on what opportunities actually arise.

MR DOSZPOT: I think the problem, from memory, for low-cost housing is that if you do not own the land, if the government only lends it to you, so to speak, you cannot borrow enough to build accommodation on it. So that is one thing you may want to consider. When is Havelock House going to be up and running—the opportunity for students to stay there?

Mr Stayner: Well before the end of the year. They have a vacant place now, so they are looking to—

MR DOSZPOT: And that is a stand-alone property?

Mr Stayner: It is part of the building that they have on Northbourne. So it is not a stand-alone property; it is a unit as part of that building.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time. Thank you very much for appearing today. We did give you some hard questions, so you did well. A copy of the transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you so that you can check it for accuracy. Thank you once again for appearing and for putting in a submission. We appreciate it.

ROBERTSON, MS EMMA, Director, Youth Coalition of the ACT

DUNKLEY, MS JENNIFER, Policy and Development Officer, Youth Coalition of the ACT

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Ms Robertson and Ms Dunkley, to this hearing today—the education committee’s inquiry into the accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT. I draw your attention to the privilege statement which is on the desk in front of you, just so you are aware of the implications of that. Two things I will emphasise are that the proceedings are being broadcast and also recorded—just so you are aware of that when you are making any statements. Before we go to questions from the committee, I invite you to make an opening statement, if you would like to do so.

Ms Robertson: Certainly. I just wanted to start off by thanking you for the opportunity to come and have a chat with you today. As you know, we put in a short submission to the inquiry and we really welcomed the opportunity to do so. I think from the Youth Coalition’s point of view one of the challenges for us is looking just at accommodation for tertiary education students. We would certainly highlight that affordable accommodation in the ACT is an issue, and particularly access to affordable accommodation for young people.

One of the concerns we have had about the pressures around student accommodation is the downward pressure that that then puts on other young people who are trying to access accommodation, particularly those most vulnerable in our community. We would really be looking to the ACT government to take leadership in addressing the system issues for young people around affordable housing and affordable accommodation.

That said, we have also highlighted in our submission some concerns around appropriate accommodation and, in particular, around safety for young women in campus accommodation and also appropriate accommodation for specific groups, such as newly arrived refugee young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people et cetera. They are probably the key things that we would highlight. I think it is well documented that we have a very high priced private rental market in the ACT and, again, that is where we see the ACT government could take leadership in that there are opportunities through public housing to provide support to students. We would also be looking for leadership in the whole of the ACT community taking this issue on board. We certainly see that there is a large need to address access to affordable private rental accommodation for young people and specifically for tertiary students in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. The first question relates to public housing. You have mentioned the South Australian state government’s model which applies to public housing there and student accommodation. So perhaps we can get some info about that. In addition, the CIT student association in their submission talked about the program that existed in 2004 to 2007. There was a working group looking at student accommodation and then Currong was used as student accommodation. Do you have any comments on how that worked? While students are still going in there, it is a different model operating. Do you have any comments on that and also how you would see the South Australian model working in the ACT?

Ms Dunkley: The model in South Australia is essentially providing public housing to students, 18-plus, so they are able to sign a lease and take responsibility for the tenancy. The government housing association in South Australia provides the tenancy and the property and then the universities provide the other social supports that would be coming into place. I am not actually sure about the CIT accommodation program.

THE CHAIR: They talked to us about the strategy that existed. It was interesting that in their submission they mentioned that in 2004 to 2007 there was a working party that was specifically established to look at student accommodation. The issues existed then as they do now. Currong had been used to house students and it had been managed, but now those links with the university do not exist as much as they used to. It is just interesting that something similar had been tried and it was not specifically around South Australia.

Ms Robertson: Certainly, my understanding of the Currong flats situation was that there was an opportunity or a moment in time when a decision was made to move public housing tenants out. The property still existed so, rather than leave the flats vacant, they were utilised for student accommodation. I think that, wherever possible, we should be looking to that, but obviously it is not going to be available all the time.

I acknowledge that we have the highest rate per capita of public housing of any jurisdiction in Australia. While we would always say that there should be options for those who do not have any other options and that public housing is the safety net there, I do not envisage that we are going to be able to build public housing for everybody. Hence our position would be that we need to be working with private real estate. We need to be skilling young people to be able to negotiate their way through that and to have the appropriate living skills to be supported.

As to the situation of university students—and I think we have mentioned it in our submission—if you scan the weekend’s paper you will find that many of the private rental properties do not support groups. We know that incomes are not equivalent to what people are going to need to live on their own. Certainly, I think there is a role for public housing in providing that safety net. The advantage with students is that it might be for a set period of time. What we do not want to do is encourage people into a situation where they are going to be public housing tenants for life.

I think that is where we are seeing some of the initiatives that are coming out of youth homelessness—the youth housing and homelessness sector—around linking education to accommodation. Supporting people to be able to have other options at the end of their supported study is really important. What is a little different with tertiary students, I guess, is that they may not need the same social supports. They may not be coming from the same place of disadvantage, but they simply cannot afford the accommodation. We do not want to set it up so that people are having to work such long hours that it affects their study just in order to be able to maintain tenancy.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Hanson?

MR HANSON: Yes. You mentioned the issue of safety. Are you talking about specifically on campus, off campus or across the board? What are the issues?

Ms Robertson: There has certainly been some further media attention in the last six months on issues around safety in campus settings. If we are exploring other kinds of cooperative living models, we need to factor in safety as well. In any kind of block settings where lots of people are living close together safety is going to be an issue. I would love to say that it is a recent phenomenon, but I do not think it is. I think that safety, particularly for young women on campuses, has been an issue for many years. It is something on which occasionally there is some media attention.

We engage with a number of young tertiary students and young women on campuses who are quite active in campaigning to try and change the culture around safety. The reason we brought it up is that we think that it can be an important part of whatever is set up around accommodation. It might be appropriate lighting, it might be having campus security, it might be the social supports and it might be the education and cultural change that needs to happen as well.

MR HANSON: Are you satisfied that enough is being done by the tertiary institutions with regard to safety?

Ms Robertson: I will say no. I think that more can be done. I think there have been some great initiatives and that some of those have been student driven and student led as well, which is excellent, but there is certainly more work to be done.

MR HANSON: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: In your opening statement you talked about using public housing to provide more student accommodation. Does that not mean there will be less public housing available for families? What do you say about that?

Ms Robertson: Absolutely. I think that is a fine line and balance. That is what I meant about the downward pressure that comes from the pressure on student accommodation to other more vulnerable people in the community that need support. I think that needs to be looked at incredibly carefully. Certainly, there are a lot of changes happening in the youth housing and homelessness sector at the moment in looking at models of support and particularly how we equip people to be able to move beyond public housing.

DR BOURKE: You talked about affordable private rental accommodation. How do you define that?

Ms Robertson: How do we find it?

DR BOURKE: What is your definition of that?

Ms Robertson: I would say that it would be 25 per cent of people's income which at the moment, for students or young people on youth allowance, is well below what most properties are advertised for.

DR BOURKE: You had probably better enlighten us and tell us what that actually is in dollars.

Ms Dunkley: It depends on which form of Centrelink payment you may be on or if you are actually employed part-time, casually, as well.

DR BOURKE: Give us a range—a ballpark.

Ms Dunkley: A range, okay. Let us say between \$400 a fortnight up to perhaps \$800 for somebody who is working hard enough to actually impact on their study as well.

DR BOURKE: So what you are saying is that a rental for a room of between \$50 and \$100 is affordable?

Ms Dunkley: Yes.

DR BOURKE: We have heard that the range is from \$130 up to—what was it, \$190 for UniLodge?

THE CHAIR: That is what they are actually asking for now—

DR BOURKE: That is what the market rents are.

THE CHAIR: It is not that they are actually necessarily saying it is affordable.

DR BOURKE: Yes, I understand that.

THE CHAIR: Yes, it is around about that.

DR BOURKE: I am commenting upon the difference. I was getting you to comment upon the difference between what you perceive as affordable and where the market is.

Ms Dunkley: There is a great disparity, yes.

Ms Robertson: Certainly, my understanding from most of the uni students I know who live on campus is they are doing that with assistance from family in terms of income.

THE CHAIR: Anything further?

DR BOURKE: I will cogitate for a while.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Madam Chair. You mentioned that a lot of this additional income that is required could be supplemented by families. We have quite a number of students coming from interstate and indeed international students coming. Do these people come into your orbit at all or is the Youth Coalition mainly aimed at local kids? Do you get the youth from overseas and interstate coming into your area?

Ms Robertson: In terms of the youth services, it is probably more likely to be local young people, although, having said that, if people are coming from interstate and get here and cannot find accommodation, they will possibly enter the service system. I think we know that most young people who are not accessing stable accommodation are couch surfing rather than in formal services. My understanding is that it is not uncommon for people at the start of a university year to be couch surfing while they are waiting and trying to find somewhere affordable to live. Again, we would argue that that is not an ideal kick-off to the academic year if you are moving around and you do not know where you are going to be living.

Traditionally the youth services probably work with the more vulnerable young people in the ACT, but certainly we supported the submission that Multicultural Youth Services put in as well. There are clearly some issues for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, migrant and refugee young people but international students as well, around the appropriateness of accommodation and access to that.

Something that we have not talked about is the notion of Australia being a learning capital. I was quite surprised some time ago to read that education is our third biggest industry in the ACT. I certainly think that if we are going to continue to promote the ACT as a place for people to come and study, we need to address this issue, because not only will it be a deterrent to people coming here but if we have an influx of more people coming here to study, obviously that means that those young people living in the ACT are going to be further disadvantaged as more people enter the market.

MR DOSZPOT: I guess that is the direction my questioning is going in. I want to find out whether the couch surfing is doable and whether people have a network. If they do not have a local network, obviously it is very hard for them to get anywhere near that sort of level of additional assistance. So what happens to the international students who come here and who may find the expenses way beyond them and they have not got the networks? Do they come to you seeking assistance? With the other groups that you mentioned, the multicultural and refugee groups, is there an issue with their student accommodation as well?

Ms Robertson: Certainly my understanding from Multicultural Youth Services is that, for culturally and linguistically diverse young people and international students, it is much more likely that they are going to end up in overcrowded housing situations, the suburban—I do not want to use the word “slums”—boarding houses that we have seen some quite public expose around. I do not think that we should shy away from the fact that there will be people in the market who will take advantage of the fact that people need accommodation.

THE CHAIR: One of the issues that have come up in a couple of submissions and also from other evidence that has been given is about legislation. You have mentioned the lack of understanding about legislation in terms of tenancies. One thing which the Tenants Union brought up was around occupancies and how there is not consistency around different definitions of occupancy. If students come under that, they get impacted by that. From talking to young people, is that something which has come up in discussions? Are there issues around tenancies and legislation?

Ms Robertson: It is not something that the young people we talked to specifically raised. I do not know whether it came up—

Ms Dunkley: I did find a lot of anecdotal evidence—people on forums like the RiotACT and things like that, young students in the ACT talking about how they may have been in private rental and they did not have the skills or the knowledge to understand the paper that they were signing, whether it was a tenancy or an occupancy agreement; something has happened and they have lost their accommodation because they have broken their tenancy. They were actually a tenant rather than an occupant and they were not aware that their responsibilities were different. What we would be advocating for, in looking at what the accommodation needs are, is that a lot of young people actually will need education around what their responsibilities are in order that they can maintain their accommodation. The maintenance of it is as important as getting it in the first place.

DR BOURKE: The submission just before yours suggested that the quality of student accommodation does not need to be as fancy as accommodation for young professionals, as it was termed. Do you want to comment on that?

Ms Dunkley: I suppose what we are speaking a little bit about is people's expectations of what would be normal for their situation. I do not think it is acceptable to assume that a student would have a lower expectation for their lifestyle than a young businessperson might have. Having said that, I think a young student may be more willing to accept lower quality accommodation because they do not have as high an income as the young professional who is working full time, perhaps. They have less choice, therefore they will take a lower standard. But what we are really looking for is people's basic needs to be met. We are not looking for fancy stuff, I suppose. I am interested in your use of the word "fancy".

Ms Robertson: I guess it would be around the links between health and wellbeing and accommodation. We are talking about a good standard of living that is going to mean that people are not stressed, distressed, getting ill because they do not have appropriate heating in the Canberra winter or they do not have heating that costs them so much that they do not ever turn it on. I think that, in terms of a standard, it needs to be something that is going to promote a good, healthy lifestyle and enable people to complete their studies.

MR DOSZPOT: Compliments, by the way, on the submission that you put in. I think you have covered it in a lot of detail; you have looked at a lot of different aspects. A number of youth and student-related individuals and cooperatives have come and talked to us. Having looked at this in the detail that you have looked at it, do you have any definite recommendations that you want to highlight to us?

Ms Robertson: I guess I would refer to what I talked about in the opening statement. I do not see that this is something that government alone can solve, but I think that government needs to take the leadership in moving this forward, particularly around addressing access to the private rental market or other options, such as cooperative housing. We are not going to see a change unless government takes quite a strong stance and shows quite strong leadership.

MR DOSZPOT: I have one final question which we keep asking everyone. Do you have any feel for the sort of unmet need that is out there at the moment?

Ms Robertson: In terms of numbers? No, not definitively.

MR DOSZPOT: Ms Dunkley?

Ms Dunkley: I would have to say certainly not definitively. I cannot make a quantification, not even with my imagination, because it is very anecdotal.

Ms Robertson: I guess the comment that I could make is that I think it will fluctuate as well. Obviously at the start of the academic year there are more people who are displaced, and hopefully that resolves itself.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned in the submission about sustaining tenancy types of programs. You mentioned the one that Woden Community Services run. Do you think that these are models that non-government organisations or government should be funding to be run to assist students? I would like to get your thoughts on whether it is something that universities should actually be doing in terms of assisting students who are having to access accommodation of some sort, unless they live at home. Do you think it is something that universities themselves should be doing as a matter of course?

Ms Robertson: My comment on that would be: why should students have to go to another external provider when they are there at the university? They are much more likely to find out about it and be able to access it if it is being provided by the university.

THE CHAIR: You mention in here that there is a role for outside organisations to provide additional assistance. You mention in particular young people, but what about students?

Ms Robertson: I certainly think that there is, but I would again hesitate to see that we were pushing everyone to community services. I think that there should be capacity within the university to assist people and then perhaps, if the needs are higher or more complicated, a community service is brought in or offered to the student.

DR BOURKE: You talked about more education. We have got a residential tenancies tribunal, with a website and lots of information on it. We have got a tenants union, which has a website and lots of information on it. There is student accommodation advice available, both through universities and through student associations. What more can be done?

Ms Dunkley: I would say that certainly the services exist. The information is out there for young people to get empowerment, so that they feel confident to know where to go, how to actually speak the language of tenancies and some of the legalistic jargon that happens in that.

Having said that, the Tenants Union website is fantastic. They have a little booklet called *Crowded House* for young people who are living in private or public share

accommodation, which is really good for them. The language is broken right down and it is easy to understand. I think it may be a cultural thing for some young people to not actually investigate these things for themselves, and it is a way of encouraging them to investigate these things for themselves. If the university was able to have a little room that you could walk into and ask somebody at any time of the day or night, that may also work for them. Young people can deal with things quite differently and interpret things quite differently.

Ms Robertson: I think that the services you have listed are great and people go to them when the crisis has occurred. So when they have got into trouble, they will go and seek help from the Tenants Union or go and speak to someone on campus who can provide tenancy advice. Perhaps what we need to look at is some broader education—whether that is actually stepping it back to the education of people in school about tenancy, housing and what life is going to be like.

The Youth Advisory Council held a consultation at the end of last year. I remember talking with a young man at the time who was just completing year 12. His parents were moving away from the ACT and he planned to stay here and continue studying. He said to me, “I need to go and find a house.” It was really clear to me that he had no idea what challenges he was about to face in doing that. His parents were about to leave the ACT, so he was looking at doing that fairly much on his own as well. It is perhaps about that step back to broader community education so that it is not a matter of only seeking the help when the crisis has occurred.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned in the submission about how it is important with housing affordability to look at things outside just income—all of those other costs which people have to incur.

Ms Robertson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you think that is something that can be done within the realms of student accommodation?

Ms Robertson: Absolutely, and I am really glad you mentioned it because I had forgotten to. As we were heading over here, I was talking about transport obviously being a really big one. Obviously things get a bit cheaper the further out from the city that you live in terms of rent, but then your other costs increase. I think it is very important in terms of student accommodation that it is located close to the university, but also close to shops and services, considering that most people are likely to not have a car and be using public transport. I think we used the example in our submission that on a Sunday night, if you were staying back studying, you hit a certain time when the buses just do not run in the ACT. So if you were relying on access to a library or studying with others and then needed to get home to the other side of Canberra, that would be quite difficult.

THE CHAIR: In terms of talking to young people about transport, is there a high reliance on public transport?

Ms Robertson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: If there are no further questions, thank you very much for appearing today. Thank you for your submission. A copy of the transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you so that you can check it for accuracy.

Meeting adjourned from 2.59 to 3.16 pm.

McARDLE, PROFESSOR PATRICK, Campus Dean, Australian Catholic University

LOVE, MS SUSAN, Campus Operations Manager, Australian Catholic University

THE CHAIR: I would like to thank you, Professor McArdle and Ms Love, for appearing before the education committee's inquiry into accommodation needs of tertiary education students in the ACT. I want to make sure that you have read the privilege statement which is on the table in front of you, and that you are aware of that. I draw your attention to a couple of things in that statement, in that this is being broadcast today and also everything is being recorded, so that you have that in mind when you are giving evidence. Before we go to questions from the committee, I would like to invite you to make an opening statement.

Prof McArdle: Sure. Australian Catholic University is very pleased to appear before the committee today. I have the apologies of our Vice-Chancellor, Greg Craven, for his inability to appear in person.

The university is a relatively small player in the ACT. However, our enrolment plan for the university as a whole projects at least a doubling of numbers at our campus within the next four years; hence that puts us into a slightly different league. We are the fastest growing university in the country, at 34 per cent over the last three years. We have moved from being a minnow in the field to being at least a strategic player. We believe that we have a lot to offer, and in particular here in the ACT region, which the university has been committed to for 50 years and intends to remain a part of for at least the next half a century.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your submission. You actually raised some really interesting issues. You pointed out something that has been raised previously—a commonwealth target, particularly around the 20 per cent of students going to tertiary education coming from lower socioeconomic groups. You also mentioned that a significant percentage of your students come from lower socioeconomic groups. You have mentioned that you do not have on-campus accommodation but that you have other ways of finding accommodation. Given that you have that fairly high percentage, how is that something that you address as a university? I would also be interested to hear your thoughts on the fact that, as you point out, that 20 per cent guarantee is going to have some pressure as well. How do you think that will impact on the ACT?

Prof McArdle: I might deal with the last part first. I think it is going to be challenging because while our university has not been too bad, at 13 per cent overall, the Canberra campus has a figure of 20 per cent low SES. Our Ballarat campus is the only one that exceeds that—naturally enough, in a sense, being in Ballarat—at about 27 per cent.

One of the things we have noted over the last couple of years is that while we have been growing rapidly, it actually makes it much harder to achieve that 20 per cent because, naturally enough, the people you attract first are the people who are not from a low SES background. The reason I make that observation is that I think that sort of challenge, most particularly for the Australian National University, is going to be an enormous one. I suspect the University of Canberra is also going to face challenges. The last figures I have seen for both of them have them languishing at around seven

per cent of their enrolments. So I think that is going to be a huge challenge.

An additional one—and I have only just become aware of this in the last week—is the challenge of the ACT’s rather good secondary education system. As you are aware, according to the rather bizarre method that the commonwealth uses for determining SES status, there are no poor people in the ACT, which comes as a shock to the very many people who are in fact poor. But officially there are no poor people here. Fortunately, just over the border in Queanbeyan, there are quite a lot of poor people, again using the same rather blunt measure. However, with some of the adjustments that the commonwealth makes, if those people send their children to school in the ACT, they almost always end up in a different SES category because it goes then with the parental community of the school, which, being dominated by the ACT, is a bit of a problem.

Previously, I thought that a lot of our students must have come from Queanbeyan. As it turns out, they do not add much to our SES quota. I think that is an enormous challenge. It is a challenge for the entire sector. As Professor Craven is fond of telling people, a university with a values system like ours sees this as core business, not simply as a means of acquiring federal funding. Given the nature of the courses that have dominated Australian Catholic University being very vocationally oriented, they tend to have been the areas we have drawn a lot of students from.

To return to the first part of your question, the university’s strategies in a variety of places are a recognition that we do need to start looking at student accommodation. We have just acquired a property in Concord in Sydney that is being renovated. It will be relatively modest, only having accommodation for 60, but it has been identified for students from low SES backgrounds who need to relocate. Our Ballarat campus does have accommodation. Susan is probably better placed to answer this. I think that has doubled in size in the last three years.

Ms Love: I think they can now accommodate close to 200 students down there. They have their own accommodation and they lease houses and sublet them back to the students.

THE CHAIR: So Ballarat have their own accommodation plus the subletting which you mentioned in your submission?

Ms Love: Yes.

Prof McArdle: One of the challenges for any university building student accommodation these days is that, like schools, they are not terribly effective for most of the year. It is a large investment that is very hard to recoup the dollars on. On the other hand I think the idea of acting as a broker in the ACT rental market is an attractive one for us. It allows us to build in some proximity, although rents in north Canberra are challenging, and it also allows us to build on the pastoral care that is offered at the campus through some form of arrangement. However, you would not want to be too onerous about that in this day and age.

MR HANSON: Would you have room on campus to build? If that became an option, do you have room there?

Prof McArdle: We do, in fact. There are a couple of vacant parts of the campus that we can redevelop. Whether we would want to or not in the short term is hard to know. The other element around that is that capital development on the campus is certainly required and it is part of the university's capital development plans for the future, but we really need to update our teaching spaces.

MR HANSON: It was more to try and get a sense of—

Prof McArdle: We do have space if that was a possibility.

MR HANSON: On page 5 of your submission you talk about the government being engaged with ANU and the University of Canberra and that it has supported both of those institutions with accommodation but you have been left out in the cold. Would you like to—

Prof McArdle: I am assuming this is mostly a factor of size and not other dimensions of government priorities. It would be best for the government to answer that. We currently have 700 students by head count. We plan on getting to 900 EFTSL, so 1,400 by head count. It is a matter of some regret to us that the government has not really entered into conversation with us around that. We do have fairly solid relationships with the government, mostly through the Community Services Directorate, where they are significant partners in our Institute for Child Protection Studies. But that really has not developed beyond that particular relationship.

MR HANSON: Have you tried to initiate that conversation with the government about accommodation?

Prof McArdle: We have not. I did, on my first day in the job, meet with Minister Barr. While he was generally supportive of the things we do on campus, he made it abundantly clear that it was not a budget priority, at least at that stage, and that was two years ago. I do not imagine that anything would have changed since then. Part of me has some sympathy in that you get a lot more bang for your buck, looking at either the University of Canberra in which the government technically has an ownership interest, or Australian National University, which gives you a nice vista just across the road. So I appreciate that. Our view would be that there are equity issues in this. If government funding is available, it should in fact be on an equity basis.

THE CHAIR: The UC Students Association talked about how ANU has got the bulk of the accommodation in the ACT and that there has been some difficulty for UC in getting access. We asked the UC Students Association if there have been any discussions between the three universities. ACU is a big campus. Have there been any discussions about cooperatively building accommodation that all the unis could access—and even CIT too?

Prof McArdle: It has not reached that point. There have been at least bilateral rather than trilateral discussions, as recently as this year. However, in both cases, the University of Canberra and ANU have made it clear to us that any time they have surplus accommodation they are most willing to *rent it out to our students, unless they require it themselves*. I noticed this morning that the signage has been taken down on

what was the Lyneham motel, which was at one stage Lyneham Hall. They did offer us 70 rooms there. I think that came online in May, when most of our students would have already acquired accommodation. They really wanted us to pick up the tab for that on an ongoing basis without necessarily being able to sublet it ourselves to our students. I did go and look at it, and I would have to say it would not be what I would consider to be a reasonable standard of accommodation.

DR BOURKE: With the models that you are talking about, such as the Ballarat campus, where you engage in the private rental market, would you be using occupancy agreements or tenancy agreements for those students?

Ms Love: I am not quite sure what agreements they have got with—

DR BOURKE: No, a different jurisdiction, different law. I am talking about the ACT. There is a subtle difference.

Ms Love: Yes. I am not sure.

Prof McArdle: We have not progressed the conversation to that level as yet. One of the ironies for us is that last year, when we became aware of significant student need, we started surveying our students about their requirements. One of the things for us is that students who are actively seeking to come to us have already factored in that we do not have accommodation, so they have made some arrangements or they are choosing to go elsewhere.

I think I noted in my submission earlier this year that we made a number of offers to students who subsequently declined our offer and took up one at UC because they had accommodation. So our arrangements would be such that the students would need to enter into an agreement, although I suspect it would not be a tenancy agreement; it would be an occupancy one, I think. One of the advantages of having a constitutional lawyer as your vice-chancellor is that you tend to have in-house legal advice, although they are probably not good at tenancy arrangements.

DR BOURKE: What sort of support do you as an institution provide for students seeking accommodation in regard to support or advice?

Ms Love: We have a campus life officer. They have information sent to them from people who have accommodation. In the Watson-Hackett area we have done a letterbox drop, asking people whether they have a room that they want to let to our students, and we have people that regularly do that. New students coming in can contact the officer and she will give them information. For the female students, we have a good relationship with MacKillop House and many of our students go there. It is run by the Josephites. We also this year have started a conversation with Global—

Prof McArdle: Global Experience.

Ms Love: They look at finding accommodation in private homes for students. Next year that will be in place so that students can also contact them to look for accommodation. We have counselling on the campus as well to help the students.

Prof McArdle: The Global experience relationship is an interesting one. These were two women whose children wanted to undertake international study and the universities they were looking at did not have accommodation, so they started their own business brokering. They found accommodation for their children and then realised there was a market both out of Australia and into Australia. They focused initially on the international market and then discovered there was quite a reasonable market for ensuring that there was good matching between the needs of students and the price range they were willing to pay. They matched that up with families, or people who were renting units or houses. They have a variety of methods. They report considerable success. It seems to us to be a good interim measure at least for supporting the needs of students.

DR BOURKE: Have they got a website or something?

THE CHAIR: CIT talked about that. They do it within their staff as well. They see whether staff are willing. They mentioned the issue of matching up as a key thing particularly.

Prof McArdle: We had an offer from one of our staff members this year about having students live in rental accommodation. They have an investment property. I must confess to being slightly nervous around that simply because, while the university would broker it so it was relatively unidentifiable, I just think that there are unfortunate things. The people we are dealing with are young people who want to engage in the full social life and gamut and our staff may or may not actually support that when it is their own accommodation. There was not an issue, but I really would not want there to be one.

THE CHAIR: You have already said that you have had some students saying they have taken up another offer because UC had accommodation options there. You mentioned that a lot of the growth for the ACT in terms of students will come from regional New South Wales and that perhaps not having that accommodation will to have an impact. Is that something you have heard about? Like you said, you operate in a different state so you have the perspective that it might be a particular issue for the ACT rather than other states?

Prof McArdle: I would have to say that I think it is probably the single biggest risk for this jurisdiction because we have such an urgent need across the four or five tertiary institutions to increase our low SES uptake. That effectively means regional accommodation—regional students. Since I took up the job of campus dean I have made it a point to go and visit school principals in regional New South Wales from Pambula and Broulee on the South Coast through to Lake Cargelligo and this year the Riverina. That would be the single biggest issue that they have identified.

Interestingly, two of the principals I visited were actually people I went to school with so I knew them quite well. They told me their school had been visited by the University of Canberra six times already this year. There is a great desire to attract their students, but even then the UC does not yet have a scheme similar to the ANU's first-year guarantee. That is probably urgent to attract people, although it is hugely expensive. That is one of the issues that we face.

Particularly for people in regional and rural New South Wales, if you are used to a relatively small community, the idea of relocating to Sydney or Melbourne may not be attractive unless there is some burning reason to do so. But a number of parents I have encountered, particularly at our open days over the last three years, have said, “We actually thought Canberra was going to be cheaper, but it turns out that, for a whole variety of reasons, it might actually be cheaper to send our kids to Sydney.”

The accommodation is comparable in expense and public transport is not hugely successful as yet, particularly in the places where it is reasonably cheap to live. I think that is a risk and I think it is a problem for the ACT. This is a significant pool of people. Between the three institutions we are talking about 23,000 or 24,000, plus CIT—I do not know their numbers—students over the next five years. If 20 per cent of those need to be students effectively from regional communities that is 4,000 or 5,000 we are adding to the accommodation pool, and I am not sure that we have the capacity.

DR BOURKE: The other way to look at that is to decentralise the teaching facilities out into remote and rural Australia and thereby maintain the SES ratings in that way.

Prof McArdle: Yes. I am sure you are aware of the proposals from the University of Canberra to do that in Cooma and Goulburn. We are, in fact, giving some thought to something as well. We have had a tradition at the Canberra campus of doing weekend teaching in regional locations. It simply becomes uneconomic after a while. In any single location it is very difficult to get numbers that are viable without quite significant support. That is the challenge.

If you look at, for example, the University of Wollongong, which operate centres like this in Nowra, they tend to have a very narrow range of courses that they offer which may or may not be of great use. For us there are some obvious ones. We could do education relatively easily in regional locations, but the numbers for education courses across universities and across the country are in stasis. There is something decidedly mundane—I think that is probably the word. If you want to be a teacher that is great, but you do not actually see other career opportunities in the same way that health sciences seem to have captured the public imagination in recent years.

My counterpart at our Melbourne campus says that we could hang a five-storey sign outside our Melbourne campus saying “we hate nurses; go somewhere else” and we would still over-enrol. There is something at the moment about any health sciences course that any university is offering—that we can fill the places over and over again, with one caveat, at undergraduate level. The University of Canberra, for example, has taken an interesting path in choosing to predominantly offer its allied health courses as postgraduate ones.

MR HANSON: Could you give me a breakdown of your students in terms of how many are interstate, how many come from the ACT and how many come from overseas?

Prof McArdle: Yes. We have very small numbers at our Canberra campus for internationals—I think it is 17 this year. The other students are less easy to classify. It is partially because of that SES breakdown, but effectively, of our 700, about 300 are

from the ACT and the rest are from regional and rural locations.

MR HANSON: So really we are talking about, assuming that the bulk of those would be able to live with parents or perhaps—

Prof McArdle: We have a significant number from Yass and Goulburn who commute. However, if they know other students doing the same course—and doing the same course is relatively important in terms of timetabling—car pooling is actually the cheapest option; they can stay at home. As soon as they are doing a different course to anyone else they know and the timetable is different—and we have had a few people tell us this on open day—it effectively becomes cheaper to move.

Taking up Dr Bourke's earlier question around teaching in rural locations, while there are advantages in terms of lifting our enrolment, we are also much more hampered in conveying the university experience to students in that set of circumstances. It does wonders for our bottom line—the commonwealth will think that it is really good—but, on the other hand, we think there is a point to people engaging with the ACT and, more importantly, engaging with other students in an on-campus situation, though that is vastly different from when I was an undergraduate student.

To be blunt, for students now, university study is probably the third level of people's involvements. They need to eat and they see work as being absolutely essential. Like the rest of the country at the moment, they are terrified of debt, including HECS. Students are very keen on trying to pay off their HECS debt as they go. They pay for accommodation and have a social life, and at that point they turn up for uni.

Our demographic is odd. We have a lot of public servants who are part-time to full-time public servants and part-time students. They are seeking career retraining or career options. About 35 per cent of our students are over the age of 30. It is an interesting demographic. It is part of the reason we value our pathways from CIT where we pick up a lot of those students.

MR DOSZPOT: Good afternoon, Professor McArdle and Ms Love; good to see you. You have mentioned before that you have 17 international students—is that what you said? So you have got a total of 750-odd students, 17 from overseas. How many are from regional or interstate—

Prof McArdle: About 400 would be from regional—

MR DOSZPOT: All of these students are at the moment adequately accommodated, or are you aware of any of them—

Prof McArdle: Leaving aside the international students—and I will come back to those—we are not aware of too many of our domestic students who are sharing beds, without choice.

MR HANSON: It is a good Catholic university. I am sure it would never happen.

Prof McArdle: We have a lot of married students. Inevitably at the beginning of the year, there are challenges, particularly for males, until they meet other people that

they can get some form of accommodation with. Our international students, by and large, are okay as well, though this year we have an international student who is a PhD scholar on an AusAID scholarship. I foolishly thought that part of the AusAID scholarship would be brokering accommodation, which it was not. So he arrived looking for accommodation and we tried our best. He eventually made contact with other international students to discover that some of them who are in accommodation not too far from here offered by another institution told him that they had spent up to 18 months sharing accommodation which involved them sleeping on somebody's sofa.

Things are pretty tight. International students run into problems in the rental market, particularly if they have families. I have a rental property in the north of Canberra which I am ashamed to say goes for vastly in excess of its worth in terms of rental. The last time it was vacant we had three international students apply, each of them families of at least four, for a two-bedroom unit that is probably half the size of this room. I could not in conscience rent it to them. I did not mind if we had to drop the price. I think there is a really desperate need for international students, particularly those with families who are not catered for really by any of the institutions.

MR DOSZPOT: Am I correct in assuming that there is some accommodation, or there used to be accommodation, at your centre?

Prof McArdle: No. There was accommodation for conferences, but that failed to meet fire regulations. The university then acquired the property which we converted into teaching and office space.

MR DOSZPOT: I just wanted to clarify that, because I thought it was a monastery or something at one stage.

Prof McArdle: One of our buildings was, in fact, a monastery and retreat centre for a number of years. Eight years ago, I think, they could not any longer run it in that capacity and we acquired it. It really is entirely used for office space and teaching space at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: Would you have room to build any accommodation? Is that part of your plan?

Prof McArdle: It is not exactly part of our plan, mainly because our capital plans are committed to additional and more flexible learning spaces. If our interest on open day turns into the numbers we would expect—we are beginning a new course in nursing and paramedicine next year, in conjunction with ACTAS—over the next four years the new places attached to that course would grow to something like 200 students. We need additional laboratory space, nursing ward space, simulation space and more flexible teaching space. That is going to soak up most of our financial capacity for a while.

DR BOURKE: Your institution has had a presence in Canberra for 50 years, and you have never found the need to build your own accommodation?

Prof McArdle: No. It is hard to know why.

Ms Love: I think over the last few years we have had more rural people, rural students, come to the university. I think before that we did not have as many.

DR BOURKE: It used to be a teachers college.

Ms Love: Yes.

Prof McArdle: Primarily, with respect to the evolution of the campus, in two years time when we celebrate our 50th anniversary we are hosting a seminar on education in the 1960s, with a particular focus on Catholic education, which was at a transition point from religious staff members to lay staff members. Just down the road at Goulburn, the relatively famous school strike started over the failure to register one of the Catholic schools because of an insufficient number of urinals, which led the then bishop of Canberra, Eris O'Brien, to close all the schools in Goulburn and have the students present themselves on a Monday morning for enrolment in each of the state schools, which was considered to be the catalyst for federal funding of private schools. So it was an interesting time.

Our campus was founded as a response to the Australian Catholic Bishops' decision to commence a national teacher training institute. Once the building was opened that vision virtually wilted as people decided that that really was not going to happen or whatever. After that, the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia refocused their attention on Canberra, while still catering to rural communities away from base education. For example, when I grew up in Wagga, frequently weekend schools running from Thursday evening to Sunday were held at our school for members of the local community, but it was predominantly focused on people wanting to undertake post-graduate study or to upgrade their skills. So when we were founded it was an interesting time and I think it was a period of interesting change in Australia.

MR HANSON: That is a good segue into my question because I assume that a lot of your students are Catholic. Does that give you an opportunity in terms of accommodation to work with the Catholic community here in the ACT, so both the church as a structure and also I imagine there would be a lot of Catholic families who would be amenable to taking in a Catholic student?

Prof McArdle: Yes.

MR HANSON: Do you harness that?

Prof McArdle: Yes. The second part is all true. The first part about the students being predominantly Catholic is less so, although recently through some other work I have done for the university I have got a better handle on that. I would once have said only 50 per cent of the students at our campus are Catholic. Australian universities do not gather information on that question, and there are good reasons for that which I am sure we all understand, so this is the first time the university has ever asked that question about the student body. I was surprised. About 62 per cent of the students in the Canberra campus identify as Catholic, although a higher percentage have attended Catholic schools.

Yes, we do make use of the Catholic network, both formally through MacKillop

House and informally through the various parishes. That has periods of extraordinary success and periods where, for reasons beyond you, it does not seem all that successful.

THE CHAIR: I want to go to the question of government assistance. You said that it is unlikely that any uni is going to get any capital assistance from the commonwealth. Do you think that the commonwealth should play a role in assisting as well, whether that is through land or any other sort of things? If the commonwealth are putting up provisions like needing to have 20 per cent coming from low socioeconomic groups, should they be playing a role in assisting with accommodation, which is going to impact on unis?

Prof McArdle: I think there are a couple of levels of answer to that. To deal with the more flippant one first, there are political issues associated with this. While the commonwealth agenda would like to see more students from rural and regional Australia attending universities, they would be, for a range of reasons which I am sure are obvious to the committee, much happier if those people attended universities close to their geographical locations. Hence our Ballarat campus gets a reasonable degree of commonwealth funding and support and has been encouraged to submit an education investment fund application. The next round, which I think is \$500 million, is reserved for regional universities and regional campuses. So that is a distinct possibility.

With respect to the other level, every university that is seeking to grow its numbers, and even some of those that are not seeking to grow their numbers, have suggested to the commonwealth that a significant capital injection is required. This has resulted in something which I am sure people knew but avoided focusing on—that of our teaching grants, which is where most universities get most of their money, 20 per cent of that money is nominally supplied for capital development. So the commonwealth's view is that it has been funding capital increases for a number of years, and that if you enrol more students you are getting more money; therefore you have more capital grant.

I actually buy that; I think that is reasonable, apart from one thing. The growth since Denise Bradley's report came out, and what we anticipate the growth will need to be in 2012, 2013 and 2014, may mean that there is a role for the commonwealth, I would suspect, in perhaps brokering loan arrangements that would enable universities to exceed other borrowing limits because there is this dual thing of needing accommodation, and that is probably true everywhere, but also needing to update teaching stock.

There has been a rapid change in education of late. While the building the education revolution funding was much maligned, I suspect that any visit to any ACT school that has made use of the money would see money very well spent. And most of those schools have invested very heavily in enhancing technological capacity. A school that is close to our campus has turned into a six-star environmental school building, which has not only freed up a number of other things because of the savings around that but also has improved the technology. That same school, and I know there are others, have now supplied all the kindergarten students with iPads. Recently there has been lots of work done around improving literacy and numeracy achievement through the

use of iPad technology in a way that no other technology has done.

Universities are lagging behind on this stuff. We went through a phase three or four years ago where our students turned up for lectures and then disappeared. The place could have been a ghost town. Our cafe was on the verge of financial collapse, and then they all started hanging around and one wondered why. It was because we put in wireless broadband access, high speed. As you are probably aware, the ACT, despite being the national capital, has appalling broadband connection rates, and broadband speed is the bane of my life. I live across the road from our campus and I frequently find it easier to walk over to work and access our net than I do to access the ISP that I use at home. Our students are doing the same thing. They turn up and they say, "I can download absolutely anything I need here in five minutes wirelessly."

That has actually been really good for campus life, but universities are finding that that sort of investment is necessary. We have not even yet got to the next bit of what you do about not just treating social networking as a challenge for all of us but actually using it to enhance education. We have several members of staff who pioneered this, but it is early days. But that all has capital costs. I think commonwealth, state and territory governments could be very useful in offering to assist tertiary institutions with relatively short-term loan guarantees or at low interest, which is still expensive but could get people over the hump of the next couple of years.

We have a target of doubling our undergraduate numbers in the next four or five years. My understanding is that the University of Canberra's view is that they are at close to capacity for undergraduates. ANU have recently announced their plans to grow by between three and five per cent, but given that they do not want to lower their university entrance requirements, it is hard to see how they will achieve that low SES target and how they will achieve much of an increase.

THE CHAIR: We are, unfortunately, out of time. Mr Doszpot, a very quick question, because we are out of time.

MR DOSZPOT: I must confess that I do frequent your cafeteria for various reasons and I do find the internet reception very good. You mentioned that you are looking at around 1,000 students.

Prof McArdle: 1,000 EFTSL, so that will probably be, given our demographic, somewhere between a 1,300 and 1,400 head count.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that the capacity of the university?

Prof McArdle: No. That will exceed our current capacity but we plan on investing in some new infrastructure.

MR DOSZPOT: If you do reach capacity and you get additional students, I think you alluded to the fact that that could in fact allow you to utilise some of the funds that the federal government gives to build something; is that right?

Prof McArdle: It is unlikely that they would make a direct capital grant for that

reason, but we would be able to utilise additional capacity from the enhanced student income, student fees, to do that.

THE CHAIR: We are, unfortunately, out of time. Thank you very much, Professor McArdle and Ms Love, for appearing today. A copy of the transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you so that you can check it for accuracy.

Prof McArdle: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.

DEANE, PROFESSOR ELIZABETH, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Students), Australian National University

ANDREWS, MR BRUCE, Director, Residential and Campus Communities, Australian National University

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Professor Deane and Mr Andrews, for appearing before the education committee's inquiry into the accommodation needs of tertiary education students. I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is on the table in front of you, just to make sure that you are aware of that and the implications in that. I draw your attention to two things to note in that—that the proceedings are being broadcast and also recorded—just so you are aware of that when you give evidence today. Before we go to questions from the committee, I would like to invite you to make an opening statement today.

Prof Deane: There is probably not much more than what has been written in our submission, but I could summarise the ANU's position. By the beginning of next year, with the completion of our final building, which is called SA4—student accommodation 4—we will be able to accommodate close to 5,000 students, which is about 40 per cent of our student load.

We have a range of different accommodation types suited to different pockets and different personal desires. We have the older halls, some of which are catered and others uncatered. They are the cheapest by far. The uncatered are \$164 a week and the catered are just over \$300. We have also within our halls what have previously been called chubbies cubbies, which are little demountables, studio-style accommodation, which are just over \$200. They are self-catered. The Laurus wing is actually attached to one of the old halls.

We have postgraduate accommodation in University House, which is shared bathrooms and self-catered, also in the \$164 range. We have flats in Graduate House, which is attached to University House—I am not quite sure what their cost is—and then we have the four at UniLodge which is the newest accommodation. They range from single studios to a range of different types of units, up to five and now six in SA4. They are the most expensive offerings. They are the newer ones. They have built-in bathrooms and kitchens and some of them are quite nice. Some of them range up to nearly \$300 a week. I cannot remember the exact prices. You have probably got a better memory than I have.

Mr Andrews: In Lena Karmel, the new building next year, the most expensive will be the single-bedroom flats which will be \$350 a week.

Prof Deane: They are obviously at the most expensive end. Most students try and get the cheapest accommodation, and we cannot really accommodate all of them at the cheaper end. We have quite pressing demands for accommodation. You might want to ask me questions as we go along. In the last couple of years we have taken off-site sites to meet the increased demand.

We are different to all other Australian universities. We offer a first-year guarantee, so if you are an undergraduate student new to the ACT—that does not mean you are necessarily coming into first year; you could be transferring into second year from

another university—we will guarantee you a bed because of the obvious difficulties of getting accommodation. That means it has been hard to transit students out and through our accommodation. Once they are in, they tend to stay, and we have not really got an ejection policy. We let students stay as long as they want, within reason, in the accommodation they have been offered, which means we have had fewer of the cheaper sites. By default, a number of the newer students have ended up in the more expensive accommodation.

We do not guarantee accommodation to postgraduate students, but we do feel a moral obligation to give them as much support as possible. We offer help with finding other places. We offer to facilitate agreements with real estate agents. In the last two years we have taken off-site extra accommodation, first at City Gate, the big hotel which has now gone, and rented it out to postgraduate students, and this year at Lyneham Motor Inn, which is also going to be knocked down, as well as UniGardens. The majority of those beds were occupied by postgraduate students. In fact, we fell short of our anticipated demand this year. We have lost money on those types of initiatives, but we have balanced it with keeping some sort of good faith with students.

We know there is a degree of unhappiness from postgraduate students, particularly students who obviously travelled from outside Canberra to study at ANU. We have probably done an extreme amount to try and accommodate students. It is a tight market. It is not like Sydney or Melbourne where there are other options. We have gone after government funds. We have NRAS funding for UniLodge, which has taken down the costs a bit, but there is a limit to how much extra funding you can get and there is a limit to how much the university can invest in accommodation.

We have ongoing dialogues with our students about their wishes for change—concerns over tariffs and concerns over levels of pastoral care. The bottom line is that everything costs money, and we are always trying to balance the budgets around it. Not all students want the same things. Some students want a lighter touch. Any improvement in service provision is going to have to come from somewhere—largely the students who are receiving the extra benefits.

That is a pretty broad brush of where we are at. We have got, I think, a lot of accommodation. We have striven to accommodate different needs and different capabilities for payment, both domestic demand and international demand, and we have not necessarily satisfied it 100 per cent.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Professor Deane. As you can imagine, we have heard from different groups and last week primarily from student associations. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the first-year accommodation guarantee, as you can imagine, and whether or not that has created some pressure on student accommodation in general in the ACT. Obviously we have got the other tertiary institutions here. You mentioned, Professor Deane, that all your students do not move on and it makes the accommodation more expensive. Do you find that has any impact on students that might be coming to ANU and whether they are from lower socioeconomic groups? Bearing in mind the commonwealth government's 20 per cent figure, which they have quoted around SES, what sort of impact might that have on you as an institution in future?

Prof Deane: We have not really correlated student population in our residences with their background. We do not ask them that type of information. We are striving to increase our low SES intake. We have a particular problem in the ACT with having no postcodes that attract the label.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that has been mentioned.

Prof Deane: We have actually got a number of strategies in place in the country. We have a partnership program with Goulburn, Young and Bega high schools. There is another one down the coast—Eden. We are striving to encourage students from rural areas to come here. We have an alliance relationship with a number of universities around Australia, particularly ones that have low SES rural or regional demographics—USQ and CDU in particular. We have an agreement whereby they do their first year at those two universities and we will accept them into second year at ANU. We have put up some scholarships, but we realise that we actually need to provide scholarships for low SES students so that they can afford accommodation, whatever we offer.

We are actually looking at endowment campaigns to increase alumni and other giving to support residential scholarships for disadvantaged students across the university. I think Bruce Hall have a campaign running. Next week, I think, they have got a bunch of alumni coming in. We are acutely aware that the position of Canberra makes it much more difficult to support low SES students. I do not know if it is our location and the fact that students have to live in residence that is turning off low SES students.

THE CHAIR: So that is not something you have heard as being an issue?

Prof Deane: We do surveys of students, but we do not particularly dig into their socioeconomic background. We have also in the past two years focused on finding students work on campus. The categories H—higher education workers 1 to 3, which are usually the unskilled labourer in office-type employment—we have not completely set aside but targeted as employment opportunities for students on campus. It is another strategy to try and give them a skill set related to their area of study but also increase employment opportunities for them.

I am a particular fan of the work-study programs in the US where universities actually have students from low SES backgrounds given preferential work opportunities. That is not necessarily something that happens a lot in Australia. Part of it is concerned with unionisation of the workforce in Australian universities, which is not necessarily the case in the US in some of the universities. I think it is a strategy that Australian universities are increasingly looking at. I think that about 15 universities, led by a Victorian university, are putting student work first as a strategy to support low SES students.

THE CHAIR: In terms of accessibility of accommodation, one of the things you have mentioned in your submission was exploring equity-based admissions and allocation systems during 2011. Is that something you have started looking at in terms of access to accommodation?

Prof Deane: We actually have a review of our academic admissions schemes going

on. We are changing our bonus points—

THE CHAIR: It just mentions residences. It may have been in relation to international students, but it talks about looking at that equity-based issue.

Mr Andrews: Yes, looking specifically at the entry systems so that it can be as transparent as possible. I personally have a preference for a ballot system. After people have submitted their application in a timely fashion, we will have the appropriate information, which will be their contact details and those types of things. If we moved towards that type of system, we could be truly addressing equity issues in a very effective way.

THE CHAIR: So moving to a ballot system?

Prof Deane: The ballot will not target low SES. It is a random—

Mr Andrews: No.

Prof Deane: At the moment, students are given one choice in residence. They can choose either catered or uncatered, but we do not ask them their SES status.

Mr Andrews: No, we do not.

Prof Deane: No, we do not ask them that. We have not used a system that backgrounds them. The major thrust at the moment is looking at our processes for giving a leg-up to students who might not have performed well because of disadvantage, and that is through changing our bonus points system. At the moment we have a maximum allocation of five bonus points. There are about five different categories that UAC use, and a bonus point for outstanding performance in a particular subject area. But you can only get a total of five bonus points. So we have now disaggregated that, and we are giving a maximum of five bonus points for disadvantage and a maximum of five for subject performance.

We are also revising our Indigenous entry programs to try and facilitate undergraduate Indigenous entry. That is a bit more complicated because it is tied in with selection processes and residential activities. But it is not specifically targeting accommodation. It really is trying to get them into university in the first place. With respect to Indigenous students, we have actually set aside two residences as locations where those students can feel like they can create a community, not a ghetto, and that is Burgmann and Burton and Garran, isn't it?

Mr Andrews: Bruce and Burton and Garran.

Prof Deane: Bruce and Burton and Garran, yes. So we have some strategies in place, but not ones that preferentially allow low SES students into residences, nor provide scholarships.

MR HANSON: Thank you very much for your submission. All the detail in it is very useful. Have you got a sense of the number of people that you turn away? If you accommodate 5,050—or you will—and that is 40 per cent of your students, how many

would otherwise want accommodation who you cannot accommodate? There would be a percentage who do not want to live on campus.

Prof Deane: For 2010, we forecast and started looking in September. We thought we were going to be a few hundred beds short. When all the applications were in—and we have changed our processes since then—we were about 200 beds short. In January of that year, we then acquired City Gate, which we put about 150 students in. As far as I know, we had sucked up all the students who had not found anywhere else to live.

MR HANSON: So you think you are meeting the need?

Prof Deane: I am giving you a longitudinal study.

MR HANSON: Okay.

Prof Deane: So we did that at the beginning of last year. Towards the end of last year, it looked like we were going to be in the same boat—in fact, even worse, because our international postgraduate acceptances were much higher than they had been in previous years. So our worst-case scenario was 500 beds short. During November and December, we went all over Canberra looking for places we could take on lease. We took UniGardens, which we had before, which accommodates 114 or something, and we took Lyneham Motor Inn, which we called Lyneham Hall, which accommodated 100 and something as well.

Mr Andrews: And the Carotel.

Prof Deane: And the Carotel.

Mr Andrews: We still have 24 postgrad students there, and we also took a floor at the Rex Hotel, which was 41 students.

Prof Deane: That is right; I forgot about the Rex.

Mr Andrews: Again, postgraduate students.

Prof Deane: When we actually bedded all the Rex, all the Carotel, all the UniGardens, we only had about 30 students in Lyneham. So there were no others that we did not know about.

MR HANSON: So there was no-one else applying that you could not accommodate. Essentially what you are saying is that there is no significant gap there in terms of the desire for accommodation?

Prof Deane: Obviously we did not have enough accommodation on campus for those but we managed to accommodate those.

MR HANSON: In another fashion.

Prof Deane: But now we have another 500 beds that come online in January and we think that those 500 beds will soak up the unmet need.

MR HANSON: In terms of business, I did a back-of-the envelope estimate that it was \$200 a week for the number of students you have got. That is \$52 million a year in turnover. Are you running this at a loss or a profit? Is it a break-even?

Prof Deane: It depends which residence you are talking about.

MR HANSON: I suppose I am talking globally.

Prof Deane: For the residential halls, the old ones, we are only just covering our operating costs. We are taking a small amount off the top for maintenance, which is not covering our maintenance costs. At the moment we estimate we have \$40 million of backlog maintenance on those buildings. We have just commissioned a new report, which is not finished yet, to tell us which ones we should knock down and which ones we should fix. So with the old halls, we would say they are losing. UniLodge is a different matter because it has been a privately—what do you call them?

Mr Andrews: They were a BOOT scheme to start with. Now they are under the ownership of the university. The cost of money has led to those buildings having probably much more accurate life cycle plans, and that is something that we are now bringing to the ANU halls. We are working on a process now of bringing about a life cycle plan for those buildings.

Prof Deane: The bottom line is that, because we are paying real money for the real money costs of UniLodge, we are not making a profit. We are just basically—

MR HANSON: So you are trying to run it basically so that it covers the costs. Having said that, you have a big cost coming up with these older buildings that you have not anticipated. Where does that money come from—out of the global funds that the university has got?

Prof Deane: We are doing the analysis at the moment. So we are waiting for the final report from the architect in order to decide what to do. But we do know this is a looming problem. We did not raise the tariffs last year, which was an issue. We operated in the red, so we are putting the tariffs up this year, but it is only up by a small percentage—about \$8 a week or something.

Mr Andrews: The tariffs for next year, for us to break even, rose by 7.4 per cent. We put a number of proposals forward and that was the one that would have us netting off, because we do not look to produce surpluses. The surplus that comes heads straight back into the maintenance program.

MR HANSON: With the UniLodge concept, we got some feedback from the student associations that it can be a bit isolating and that there is a culture that you can get in a hall and that particularly the ones which have breakfast, lunch and dinner catered for have a much stronger culture, and the other ones can be a bit isolating. Of course, it is different strokes for different folks, but have you got a comment on that? Are you comfortable with what you are providing? Although it might be good accommodation, does it actually provide some of the other more esoteric requirements that you would want to be providing as a world-class university?

Prof Deane: I do not think the ANUSA's view is necessarily universally held by students within the accommodation. We have done surveys of UniLodge separately. About three months ago we did a comparative survey to see whether the levels of dissatisfaction or satisfaction were the same in the old halls versus UniLodge, and they were slightly less but not much different.

Not all students want what I would call the year 13 experience that some of the residential halls offer. Older international students in particular like some peace and quiet. They like to be able to get away and study. It is true that we have had to put first-year students in UniLodge, and, yes, comparatively speaking, it is dearer and they might see that there is more fun and games happening over in the old halls. But we have put community assistants and residential assistants, three of each, into each lodge. They do have a residents committee. We do have pastoral care activity programs. I have been to a few of them. There is not a huge buy-in by the population of students. I do not know how you answer that. I think there are some students who are quite happy with the type of accommodation.

MR HANSON: Sure, and certainly the student associations made that point. I suppose what I am getting at is: are you comfortable that that model, which seems to be increasingly a big part of what you are providing, is giving you the same sort of intangible results regarding what a university experience provides in terms of pastoral care, culturally and a rounded education? Are you comfortable that it is providing as much of that as you would desire to get from Burgmann or one of those other halls?

Prof Deane: We probably operate our UniLodges significantly differently from some of the ones in the major cities. I do think we have put more extras in because of the comparison close by. We have just renegotiated the management contract with UniLodge. We have put a residential deputy in place where there was not one before, and we are putting what we call subdeans—we are changing their names—into each of the four lodges. So we will now have another pastoral care position in residence. I believe that, for the money, because we are not trying to pile on the costs here, we are providing an opportunity in those residences for students who wish to engage.

We have a number of strategies aimed at enriching student life, not just in the residences, bearing in mind that another 60 per cent of students out there are not in residences, and for whom we have a responsibility to provide an enriched campus experience. I am always concerned when we start to cross-subsidise the students in residence out of the pockets of the students who are not in residence. We have invested in what has been called a non-residential hall, a virtual hall, Griffin, which has 200 Canberra live-in students, arranged in a pretty similar way to a hall, with community assistants, social programs and pastoral support. So we are looking at other models that might meet students' needs.

The original intent of UniLodge was to house postgraduate students. That was what they were built for, bearing in mind what we believed was a higher desire for independent living. But because of the first-year guarantee and because of students actually staying longer in the older halls, we, by necessity, put undergraduates, early undergraduates, in those residences. We are rewriting a paper for the vice-chancellor to recritique the way we have actually managed the placements in the halls. We are

looking at a model whereby students have two years in one of the older halls and then limited pull-back—if you like, return—and have return based on students taking on leadership positions in those halls, with a view to transiting the older students out into either independent accommodation that is available in the suburbs or into UniLodge.

We are trying to look at ways to free up, if you like, the cheaper, more homely-type accommodation that some of the younger students prefer. And I say “some” because I do not think all of them want that particular experience. Have I covered everything?

Mr Andrews: I was simply going to add that I think the lodges are now getting to an age where they are starting to have their particular different flavours. So Davey Lodge, being the first of the lodges, has a slightly different academic flavour than Kinloch. Warrumbul has a much younger demographic, so they are much more active in wanting to be part of the sporting aspects of the different programs that we offer. I think that the life in the lodges is really picking up. As Professor Deane was saying, this year we have added extra positions, so there are community coordinators who are now working in each of the buildings specifically to augment and support the residential assistance teams, the community assistance teams. The new position of the residential life manager there is to make sure that the programming model meets our requirements.

Since I came into this role at the beginning of the year, I have been working a lot closer on a much shorter time frame basis with the lodge management to address issues and to make sure that we have a much more free flow of communication about what is needed and what might be happening and also making sure that the students in the lodges are tapping into all of the systems that are in the rest of the campus.

Next year we will have learning communities. The ANU has a rather unique system of learning communities, so they are university wide. We have 18 learning communities—staff, students, emeritus faculty and community members—and we are planning to house two of the communities in the lodges next year. They have their physical location within the different halls of residence, so we are wanting to make sure that the lodges are integrated into that program. The virtual hall, Griffin Hall, is also aiming to have a learning community housed within its group next year.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. In your submission, you talk about the broad lack of understanding of the ACT Residential Tenancies Act.

THE CHAIR: By students.

DR BOURKE: By students. We have heard that from other sources as well. It has been suggested to us that more education is required. In view of the fact that your university provides support for students, the students association provides support, as do other universities in town, we have got a tenants union which is acting in this area, there is information on the ACT government’s website about residential tenancies and there is also the Residential Tenancies Tribunal, what more can be done?

Prof Deane: Probably it is largely the international students who would not actually know where to look or what it all might mean. Maybe there could be some pre-information packages for them about the tenancy act. I still think they are easily

hoodwinked, if you like. I am not quite sure if that is the right word—maybe easily confused. They may not completely understand the language or the nuances of language. I do not know whether the act is translated. Are there translations of the tenancy act? I do not know. Despite all the things that might be on the web and the help that might be available, it is a vulnerable group of people. If they have not got accommodation they will often do desperate things to get it, like sign themselves into shared bedrooms and the like.

DR BOURKE: Is that not part of your role?

Prof Deane: Pardon?

DR BOURKE: Is it not part of your university's role to properly prepare them?

Prof Deane: For general education in operating the Australian system—is that what you mean?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Prof Deane: I think there is only so much we can do. We do provide pre-information packages and we do send them lots of connections to our website, which does explain it. Providing all that information is not a guarantee that students do not get duped. I do not know the solution to that. There are people in the community who get duped as well, but I do see them as vulnerable—particularly international students—and desperate sometimes.

Mr Andrews: Certainly, the counter service staff do their very best to inform students before they sign any agreements to read through them and make sure that they have an understanding and encourage them to access some of the free support services that are available to get independent information. With the halls, probably around October there will be a series of workshops for students who are living within the residences about moving off and about the type of complications that happen when a person is sharing and one person is the actual tenant and someone else is sharing on the agreement—the types of issues that might come up for people that are in those environments when they are trying to do things that make common sense to a student who has not had a lot of life experience, such as having a parent sign or trying to get a parent to sign the lease because it might get them the building, without realising that you cannot do that—that it voids it.

We are dealing with a very bright population, but sometimes the life experience quotient is not as high as maybe intelligence. So these discussion groups and seminars in October are about very practical issues that have arisen for students and the types of things that have come up in the past to give them some heads-up and also to encourage them to be aware of what they are signing, as we do with our own agreements.

Prof Deane: That is for the students we have here, but new students coming into the ACT, I think, are the ones that really are likely to be more at risk, even though we do advise them.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. You talked a bit about occupancy agreements and postulated that if there were any changes to the Residential Tenancies Act with regard to occupancy agreements you wanted to have something to say. What do you want to say?

Mr Andrews: I think that it is about making sure that the agreements are tightened to make sense. I know that the legislation changes around the density of housing could be very important things, but obviously in our environment we want to make sure that we are not going to fall foul of those density rules. In, say, the older halls, we would have rooms that are 2½ by 3½ metres, so we would want to make sure that those things were not going to be breaching anything. While we are not strictly under the act, because we are a tertiary education accommodation facility, the ANU has strived to maintain the spirit of the act. In our agreements and everything that communicates with the students we certainly mimic the act wherever possible.

THE CHAIR: One of the things the tenants union brought up around occupancy—they were probably coming from a slightly different perspective; you are talking about, as you said, the dimensions and the area that is quoted—was that there is inconsistency around what are the definitions for occupancy. Do you think that is one area where there could potentially be, I guess, some development or changes? That is probably a different area, but do you think it would be beneficial to some of the students who would go to ANU if there was clarity around how occupancies are defined?

Mr Andrews: Certainly. The act, as with any legislation, is as clear to the reader as the reader is able to interpret the information. I think that, again, this is an educated population and a very bright population which still, at times, is not able to make its way through the documentation. We certainly have plain English as a clear focus in the agreements that we have with the students. We have an online acceptance system so that the students are accepting at several points. There are several points where students acknowledge that they are reading through the agreement and are not racing and just signing it at the very end. Yes, I think anything that would clarify information for the students, whether they are living on a campus or in a shared house—in any situation—and would give them clear information about their rights and the accessibility of systems for them.

DR BOURKE: You also run home stay as well?

Prof Deane: I do not know if we do. We did have a go at it, but I am not sure we are involved. Are we involved?

Mr Andrews: No, we are not.

Prof Deane: No, we are not.

Mr Andrews: ANU College do use a home stay system. They use a large home stay company. I am not sure of the name of the company they use, but it is the large provider.

DR BOURKE: Just the concept of tapping into those hundreds, if not thousands, of

vacant rooms lying around Canberra in family homes where the children have run away from—

Prof Deane: We tried it the last two years and we did not actually get enough beds. ANU College—I do not know if you know, but it was a foundation program offered last year to international students.

DR BOURKE: Why do you think people are reluctant to rent out rooms to students in their homes?

Prof Deane: A stranger in the home—I do not know—if they have got kids?

MR HANSON: Your imagination doesn't go that far?

DR BOURKE: No, it does not.

Prof Deane: We have had a couple of problems with students. The students have had problems staying in home stay, being exploited, and we have had to deal with them. I am sure there are problems both ways.

Mr Andrews: That is certainly a problem at all universities. The home stay system can facilitate some really interesting experiences for the students, but there are always those people that fall through the vetting system. When students come in who have particular circumstances, where they do not feel safe or they do not feel it is appropriate, we do everything we can to facilitate bringing them into campus.

MR DOSZPOT: Professor Deane, Mr Andrews, I am astounded by the number of students that you do accommodate. I think it is fantastic and it must make you one of the biggest landlords in Canberra, in a way, I should imagine. Given the success you have with the accommodation that you have set up—and with universities finding it difficult to attract enough funding at times—is it feasible for you to meet some of the unmet need in other education institutions by increasing your accommodation capacity? Does that make sense?

Prof Deane: You mean build something for UC?

MR DOSZPOT: Well, not necessarily for UC, but for the student—

Prof Deane: That was a joke, I am sorry.

MR DOSZPOT: population of Canberra, if it helps you to fund the university.

Prof Deane: I do not think we are generating a profit, so it is not actually money going back to the university. We are recycling the money we get on accommodation in that system, so there is not a profit coming to the general university. We did actually have spare capacity, as I mentioned, this year, when we took on Lyneham Hall, at a significant loss to the university. We had 100 beds begging. I contacted the University of Canberra and offered them the beds. They did not want them, despite being in the newspaper—I am sorry, this is taped; I should not say this—saying they had excess students that they could not accommodate.

We also had discussions with ACU about them taking them and they followed up on those. We did not end up taking any students from either of those institutions. We have offered our excess stock. We have in the past taken in students from different institutions. Before my time we had students from CIT resident in ANU halls. The demand has not always been like this. As I understand it, in the early 2000s, we looked at shutting some of the residences because they were not fully subscribed.

DR BOURKE: We were actually told just before that that offer to ACU was not made until May.

Prof Deane: Until May? I do not know what month it was made.

Mr Andrews: No, I think it was probably—

Prof Deane: I am not sure what the date was. We were filling in—

Mr Andrews: April.

DR BOURKE: So really at a time when most people were already bedded in.

Prof Deane: We did not know what our situation was until we actually used it up. We had the space. I met the woman at another meeting. We were talking generally about accommodation and we then made the follow-through. We followed through as soon as I had met them, but it was after we had vacant space. As to the interest that we got from ACU, I was led to believe they might want it in second semester—and I think that is what you have heard as well—but there was no follow-through in second semester.

If we have excess beds in SA4, the one that is just coming online, we intend to put them out to other occupants. We actually have a strategy in place to try and fill those beds. Because of the NRAS funding, we have financial problems if we do not fill those beds. So we are making bed offers, at the same time as we are making academic offers, at the moment around SA4 to fill it. As I said, if we have vacant beds, we will be offering them.

MR DOSZPOT: We have asked just about everyone who has appeared before the committee what sort of unmet need is there. There is anecdotal evidence that there is an unmet need, but it is very difficult to quantify. Can you add any information to that?

Prof Deane: We have had estimated unmet need that we have more or less coped with at cost. We hope we do not end up in that situation again.

MR DOSZPOT: No, I understand your own, but do you have any idea of—

Prof Deane: I was just making that general preface. There will be, I think, and there probably already is, unmet need with respect to postgraduate research students, international students and domestics with families. They are generally older, postgraduate research students. International students particularly want to come with

their families. There are a whole lot of other problems associated with paying for schools and transport associated with those. We do not have a lot of family unit-style accommodation. We have some flats in Hackett, two-bedroom units in Hackett, and we have 2½-bedroom townhouses in Moorhouse Street in O'Connor. Burgmann has some unit-type things that are used by families and at Liversidge Court there is a smattering. But we do not have substantial housing that can cope with families, particularly at the cheap end.

Those postgraduate students, often on quite tight scholarships from their home countries, really find it hard to pay for houses in the Canberra market. If there is any need that we are not really addressing I think it is postgraduate research students with families. The ambition of ANU is to increase its enrolment in the postgraduate area. Certainly, some of that will be course work. That is usually for a shorter term, one to two years. Most of our ambition lies in increasing our research student enrolments. They are certainly going to be ones with families.

MR DOSZPOT: I have a very quick question. You talked about your current needs. Where does the university stand at the moment in terms of capacity? Are you near capacity or are you able to take more students into the ANU overall?

Prof Deane: You mean in terms of our enrolment or beds?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, enrolment.

Prof Deane: We are not planning to grow all that much. We want to position ourselves as a small Yale, Harvard, whatever. We will have a small undergraduate growth, not a lot—one to three per cent I think is the max—but we are looking to grow in postgraduates. That is going to be limited by the number of scholarships that are available, both Australian scholarships and international scholarships.

MR DOSZPOT: That answers my question. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing today. I am sorry, but we are out of time. I just want to let you know that a transcript of today's hearing will be sent to you so you can check that for accuracy.

The committee adjourned at 4.46 pm.