

The Place of Student Accommodation in the Changing Climate of Student Demographic

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The needs of students are affected by a variety of factors including their age, where they live, level of study and family situation. In the area of student accommodation, it is accepted that most accommodations are catered towards first year student aged between 17 and 25 – this is definitely so for university owned housing at the University of Sydney. This caveat displaces later year students, postgraduate and mature aged students from securing affordable accommodation in an expensive city. It also discounts the experience and knowledge these students bring – there is no transference and no sense of community developed.

Statistics indicate that Australia's population growth rate between 2005 and 2009 was 0.7% higher than the world's average of 1.2%. The provision of education services to international students is one of the primary reasons for the above average growth rate; it was reported that in 2009, over 1 in 5 tertiary education students were international students. It is evident, and indeed it has been for a while, that Australia's educational providers have to account for the varied needs of international students.

Aside from the influx of international students, research has indicated that the ageing population will affect the world. The impact of this research is important to all education providers – in the university sector, providers have to be prepared to accept that no longer will the majority of the student body be 17 – 25 year olds.

Accommodation admissions practice in at least 10 Australian Universities will be discussed. It is envisaged that the data will allow for a breakdown to be developed on the current priorities adopted for accommodation admissions. This paper aims to identify how changes in student demographics will affect existing accommodation admissions policies and steps that can be taken to ensure universities are not trailing behind these changes.

In the words of Eric Hoover, 'Demographic change doesn't mean the sky is falling...but it's a good time to take a close look at the roof.'

Key Words

International students, accommodation, university housing, independent living, mature aged students.