

Graduate Residences Network¹

Dr Ian Walker²

“Postgraduate students’ experiences ... are not just affected by what happens in the classroom or the lab.”³

“The wellbeing of postgraduate research students is increasingly a topic of national concern ...”⁴

With increasing demand for postgraduate accommodation and growing recognition of a range of particular needs of both coursework and higher degree research postgraduate students, Australian universities and a number of residential colleges have in recent years established new facilities targeted at older and postgraduate students. Among the more collegiate in character, the most recently opened is Graduate House at St. Paul’s College, Sydney University; International House, Melbourne University, has a Graduate Wing with a Graduate Students’ Association established in 2015; of 400 students at St Thomas More College UWA, 120 now form a Graduate Association; Sancta Sophia College at Sydney University opened its Graduate House in 2014; the New College (Postgraduate) Village, UNSW, opened in 2009, as did the Laurus Wing of Ursula Hall, ANU; St Hilda’s College, University of Melbourne, opened the Brian James Wing in 2007, and Burgmann College ANU opened a Postgraduate Village in 2004. In 2013, Andrew and Nicola Forrest gave \$65m for Research Foundation Scholarships for PhD and other researchers at WA universities, and for the establishment of Forrest Hall at UWA to accommodate and support the scholars. The Hall and Foundation are headed by former UWA and La Trobe University VC Prof Paul Johnson.

Sir John Monash was the first Chair of the Melbourne University Graduate Association, established in 1911 and from which developed Graduate House; University House (“Oxbridge in the bush”) was opened at ANU by Prince Phillip in 1954 to accommodate PhD students and staff in what was then a graduate and research university; Kathleen Lumley College was established as a postgraduate residence in association with the University of Adelaide in 1965; ANU Graduate House opened as ‘flat-style’ accommodation in 1971, moving to new premises adjacent to University House in 1998 (administered by University House since 2002); and in 1974, Toad Hall at the ANU opened, named from the English children’s novel ‘The Wind in the Willows’ by its first residents who protested

¹ This is a slightly edited version of a short article written for the APSAA Journal *Student Accommodation* June 2019

² Dr Ian Walker has been Head of Toad Hall ANU since 2010 and was UCA President 2014-2016. He is a former Head of Ursula Hall ANU, and Principal of The Kensington Colleges and Dean at New College UNSW.

³ Zyl Hovenga-Wauchope, President, ANU Postgraduate & Research Students’ Association (PARSA)

⁴ Kelly Louise Preece, Researcher Development Manager, University of Exeter UK

against having the Hall named after a politician or such like and took their cue from the creek and willows at the back of the Hall.⁵

College-style post/graduate residences overseas include, for example, Nuffield and Wolfson Colleges at Oxford; Clare Hall and Darwin College at Cambridge; the Graduate College at Princeton; Abbey College at Otago University; and Ustinov College at the University of Durham, which notes its focus as providing *“a safe, supportive, motivating and enjoyable collegiate environment that nurtures global citizenship and enables its members to grow intellectually and socially”*. The Harvard Graduate Halls and the Harvard Graduate Commons Program provide a variety of activities and events that foster community development, engagement and care across many cultures and disciplines.

As with undergraduate residences, there must be a range of accommodation options for postgraduate students that meet issues around such things as affordability and proximity to campus, desire for greater independence and for a less disrupted lifestyle, as well as partner and family needs.⁶ Postgraduate Student Associations, including the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA), advocate for a number of these and other issues that challenge both domestic and international students in finding suitable accommodation.

Nevertheless, more than just the provision of buildings, beds and bathrooms, university residences can play a significant role in helping to meet matters related to such things as isolation and loneliness; mental as well as physical health and wellbeing⁷; higher degree research supervision and the sharing of HDR experiences; sponsor obligations and expectations; visa and work difficulties; separation from partners, families and friends, and from the familiarity of home cultures; and the provision of safety and a real sense of community, enjoyment and belonging. The sharing of research across disciplines and of a range of backgrounds and experiences across cultures is enriching, adds value to the university experience, and can be both career and life rewarding.

University Colleges Australia (UCA) is seeking to develop a Graduate Residences Network that will facilitate the sharing of ideas, programs, challenges and opportunities in residential life for

⁵ While Toad Hall initially accommodated mainly later year undergraduate students, it has since become a postgraduate and largely international residence, with a review in 2009 noting the need for increased care and support for and engagement among postgraduate students and that the Hall plays *“host to many future leaders of foreign governments ... and the potential risk to the University’s reputation of an unhappy residential experience cannot be understated.”*

⁶ Many colleges and halls, lodges, villages and a range of mainly self-catered commercial developments accommodate a number of domestic and international post/graduate students; many live in good and bad off-campus rentals.

⁷ In May 2019, the first international conference on the Mental Health & Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers will be held in Brighton, UK.

post/graduate students across our universities and beyond. An initial gathering of leaders of graduate residences (and residences that include graduates) was held at University & Graduate Houses ANU on 12 and 13 June 2019. Some 20 or so members joined with the ANU Acting DVC Academic, the Acting Dean of Higher Degree Research, the Vice-President of the ANU Postgraduate & Research Students' Association, postgraduate students and the President and Secretary of NAAUC, to discuss these matters related to postgraduate residence. It is hoped that the Graduate Residences Network will develop and that there will be a further gathering in the first half of 2020.

Further information may be obtained from Dr Ian Walker ian.walker@anu.edu.au or Ms Deborah Pugh executiveofficer@universitycollegesaustralia.edu.au



Nuffield College, Oxford



Ustinov College, Durham



New College (Postgraduate) Village, UNSW



Graduate House, Sancta Sophia College, Sydney



Graduate House, Melbourne



Forrest Hall, UWA



Toad Hall, ANU



Kathleen Lumley College, Adelaide