

Draft International Education and Skills Strategic Framework – Department of Education, Australian Government Consultation Paper

Submission from the Student Accommodation Association



About SAA

The [Student Accommodation Association](#) is a national body established in January 2018 which brings Australian education and student accommodation providers together to promote the value of quality accommodation for the exclusive use of students and the role student accommodation plays in enhancing the Australian education experience.

Under the definition of ‘student accommodation’ being ‘accommodation for the exclusive use of students’ SAA has successfully established five member categories –

- University Managed
- Residential Colleges
- Commercial purpose built student accommodation (PBSA)
- Student Hostels
- Commercial managed student housing portfolios

Our executive members (voting rights) are, education providers, commercial companies and organisations (as opposed to individuals) that either manage accommodation databases for students or operate large scale student accommodation businesses.

SAA currently have twenty four executive [members](#), including universities, residential colleges and PBSA student accommodation providers.

Since establishment, SAA has actively implemented a strategy to improve perception, clarity and consistency of the message promoted to students by Australian education stakeholders pertaining to student accommodation in Australia through regular industry led events across Australia and overseas.

The first step was to establish the definition “accommodation for the exclusive use of students” to work against the growing perception that student accommodation is all accommodation occupied by a student.

The second step was to define the categories of student accommodation providers in Australia.

The third step was to implement the [National Property Accreditation Scheme \(NPAS\)](#) which is a set of industry led minimum standards developed in consultation with SAA executive members.

SAA executive members can now submit individual property applications for NPAS accreditation, and should each property be assessed to operate in accordance with NPAS standards, that property will be awarded the NPAS stamp of quality for up to three years.

SAA National Committee

The 23/24 SAA National Committee comprises of the following nominated representatives of executive members:

- President - Geoff Denison - Director, Student Accommodation, University of Adelaide
- Vice President - Matt Row - Chief Operating Officer, UniLodge
- Committee member 3- Alex Elibank Murray - Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global and Engagement), University of Sunshine Coast
- Committee member 4- Craig Carracher (AM) - Executive Chair, Scape
- Committee member 5- Rebecca Bendall - Director, Partnership Development ANZ, Acumen
- Committee member 6- Ron DeHaan - Co-opted
- Committee member 7- Denise Von Wald - Co-opted

Definition of student accommodation

To avoid inconsistent interpretation of the framework and subsequent legislation, adopting a clear definition of student accommodation is essential. A clear, consistent, and coherent accommodation message is vital for the education sector to adopt and for international education markets to understand.

Student Accommodation Definition: ***accommodation for the exclusive use of students***

National Property Accreditation Scheme (NPAS)

The National Property Accreditation Scheme was launched by SAA in October 2020.

Support for the NPAS quality student accommodation message is best demonstrated by weblinks to the NPAS accredited student accommodation property portfolio which are now found on the accommodation webpages of the following study agencies:

- Study Australia
- Study NSW
- Study Adelaide
- Study Queensland
- Study Melbourne

Work is currently underway to ensure SAA's nine university members follow the lead of the University of Adelaide in the promotion of safe, secure, and quality NPAS accredited student

accommodation properties in Adelaide to its prospective student population via its global marketing platform.

The National Property Accreditation Scheme (NPAS) has emerged as the definitive and coherent accommodation standard promoted across the sector. It is a key component of Australia's future international education strategy to attract more students and enhance their educational experience.

The rigorous NPAS assessment criteria offers the protection that Australian education providers and stakeholders have been lacking in the past and has led to a passive approach to providing accommodation information to the international student market.

NPAS enables universities and other education providers to confidently develop and actively promote an endorsed accommodation option which is particularly important to international students.

SAA recommendations

The Student Accommodation Association sees this as a unique moment in time to embed student accommodation as a critical element to delivering a quality education experience in Australia.

This is a moment in time that the association and its members has been working to create since the association was established in 2018. This is best reflected in our longstanding mission and set of strategic objectives which have underpinned the associations success in building profile, membership, and corporate supporters.

The Student Accommodation Association would like the Australia Government in light of proposed regulatory and legislative changes pertaining to education and student accommodation providers to work through SAA and our members to consider the following recommendations:

1. Embed any regulatory framework established by the Australian Government concerning the International Education and Skills Strategic Framework and the Action Plan to address gender-based violence into the industry led and supported National Property Accreditation Scheme (NPAS).
2. Adopt the Student Accommodation Association's definition of **student accommodation** as "accommodation for the exclusive use of students" to prevent inconsistent interpretations of the framework and future legislation. A clear, consistent, and coherent message about student accommodation is crucial for the education sector to embrace and for international education markets to understand.

3. Define NPAS accredited student accommodation as the pre-qualification benchmark for inclusion in an education provider's portfolio of beds to support international education standards. This will ensure student accommodation is easily distinguishable from other types of accommodation and will promote best practices and quality standards in student accommodation. Additionally, it will establish a minimum standard for new entrants into the student accommodation sector.

Other considerations

Partnerships

Education providers have traditionally been passive in their accommodation message, leaving students to research and seek advice and assistance from third party providers in the areas of accommodation and casual employment, potentially leaving them open to exploitation.

Australian education providers are already responding to a significant change in market conditions and proactively engaging with local student accommodation providers whereby prior to the pandemic providers were more inclined to let the market address supply.

Relationships fostered between education providers and student accommodation companies, generated in the first instance by support for NPAS, will lead to the development of fit for purpose student accommodation to support international student enrolments in the future. Partnerships will lead to the deployment of capital investment which will activate an increase in supply of quality student accommodation.

Accountability

There is a significant move to ensure education providers are more accountable for a student's on and off campus student experience.

This will motivate education providers to become active in the student accommodation space to acquire secure access to quality student accommodation and provide their student population with a controlled accommodation message, offering access to safe and secure professionally managed student accommodation options.

A critical step to advance industry led standards is to gain government and the education sector's support for the NPAS stamp of quality and the properties that achieve this standard.

Next steps

The Student Accommodation Association (SAA) would value continuing to be involved in the ongoing consultation process with a view to our definition and industry led minimum standards being considered and adopted by the Australian Government.

SAA is prepared to collaborate with government, the education industry, and our sector to facilitate all concept planning discussions leading to NPAS program integration and propose that members of the SAA National Committee travel to Canberra to present NPAS to the Department of Education.

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