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# "Sorry, I am Concentrating on my Study": The Lived Experience of International Social Work Students in Shared Accommodation in South Australia

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## **Abstract**

Having international students is beneficial to Australian social work education; benefits include creating learning opportunities about cultural diversity and improving Australian universities' status on the global stage. Understanding social work students' overall experience on campus and their lived experience in accommodation outside the campus is important to maintain students' retention in social work education. However, in the Australian literature of social work education, knowledge of international students' experience in their accommodation is inadequate. Therefore, to fill the research gap, this study focused on the lived experience of international social work students living in rooming houses in South Australia. Three international social work students participated in this study. They were interviewed once using a semi-structured interview to share their descriptive lived experiences. An interpretative phenomenological approach was used to analyse the qualitative data. Five themes emerged from the data analysis: struggling to share space with housemates; struggling to interact and maintain relationships with housemates; feeling powerless as a tenant; lack of control over the noisy environment; and similarities among housemates helped to build positive relationships and enhance studying. The findings showed that living in rooming houses impacted students' study time and caused distress, affecting learning. This research suggests that educators need to understand international students' off-campus experiences, and plan off-campus support services to assist their study.

**Keywords:** International students; Social work; Shared accommodation; Rooming houses; Study; Australia

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#### Introduction

The number of international students in Australia increased from 100,000 in 1994 to approximately 876,000 in 2018 (Department of Education and Training, 2018, 2019), and they are also increasingly visible in the Australian social work education program (Battaglia et al., 2018; Diamandi et al., 2018). Having international students is beneficial to Australian social work education. It creates learning opportunities about cultural diversity (Grace et al., 2013), promotes curriculum enrichment to cover international practice and policies (Rosenman, 2007), and helps universities to establish informal linkages with foreign universities through students' local languages (Fox & Hugman, 2019). Moreover, the increasing enrolments of international social work students help to improve Australian universities' status on the global stage (Taylor et al., 2000). From an economic perspective, it also benefits economic growth by contributing \$18.8 billion of revenue. It has become the third-largest export industry in the country (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016). Overall, international students are important for the higher education sector, and universities are expected to understand the overall educational experience of international students and support them to maintain their educational markets (Brydon & Liddell, 2012).

International students' educational experiences on campuses are well documented. The research shows that they face various challenges. For instance, they face difficulties in learning English (Deygers, 2018; Fu et al., 2018), building positive social networks (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014; Yao, 2016), adapting to cultural differences (Buchanan, 2014; Presbitero, 2016), and maintaining academic performance (Banjong, 2015; Crawford & Wang, 2014). However, Arkoudis et al. (2018, p. 7), in their study of Australian international students, found that some participants still disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "my lecturers and tutors understand the challenges and pressure I face". This shows that students perceive that their experiences are not yet fully understood. The current study is informed by this finding. While much research has focused on students' experience on campus, this study shifts the research gaze to off-campus experiences in accommodation and demonstrates the significant bearing and impact accommodation has on educational outcomes.

# The missing focus of international social work students' lived experience in accommodation

Understanding social work students' overall experience in and outside classrooms is important to maintain student retention (Agllias et al., 2016). However, in the Australian social work education literature, knowledge of international students' experiences on their accommodation is inadequate, as the focus has been primarily based on two aspects: their educational experiences in classrooms and social work placement.

Australian studies reported that international social work students experienced multiple challenges in classrooms, such as classroom participation (Battaglia et al., 2018), adapting to unfamiliar teaching approaches (Irizarry & Marlowe, 2010), English proficiency (Goldingay, 2012), and understanding local knowledge (Testa & Egan, 2014). In field placements, students also faced difficulties, including racism and discrimination (Harrison & Ip, 2013), language barriers and difficulty in understanding Australian culture (Ross et al., 2019).

Only a few studies have explored students' experiences outside classrooms and field placements in Australia. For example, Gair and Baglow (2018) found that students had difficulties in dealing with financial hardships. Baglow and Gair (2019) discovered that students bore the burden of family responsibilities. Both studies concluded that these external pressures and demands significantly impacted students' educational experience and capacity to engage in learning.

Naghdi (2015) studied the retention of international university students in Australia and found that difficulties of study and low satisfaction with accommodation were two influential factors that cause students to drop out of university. Housing conditions can affect international students' academic achievement (Australian Education International, 2013; Bista & Foster, 2016; Varghese & Brett, 2011). Notwithstanding this, Obeng-Odoom (2012) stated that the inadequate focus on international students' housing is still a major deficit in the Australian literature that needs to be addressed in future research.

## Possible impacts of living in rooming houses on international students' social work study

In Australia, approximately one in four university students, including international students, live in rooming houses (Chamberlain, 2012; Rickwood et al., 2016), and living in rooming houses has become a phenomenon among Australian international students (McNamara & Connell, 2007; Shelter South Australia, 2017). From various official definitions, a rooming house can be defined as a household that contains two or more residents who have no kinship relationship, and residents only occupy a room and share the rest of the common areas inside the house (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013; Legal Service Commission, 2018).

Previous investigations of students' housing situations have demonstrated high levels of satisfaction. For example, in 2011, 86% of participants in an international student barometer project indicated they were satisfied with their housing (Varghese & Brett, 2011). This was further supported in 2013 where 84% of participants in an international student survey indicating housing satisfaction (Australian Education International, 2013). However, an Australian international student accommodation report highlighted that "being satisfied does not equate with living in optimal conditions for study and lifestyle. Satisfaction with accommodation was largely associated with low cost and convenient proximity to the university" (GML Social Research, 2011, p. 2). Studies that reported students' dissatisfaction with housing were largely carried out in Melbourne and Sydney, where students lived in overcrowded houses without legal contracts, with hidden fees and costs, and experienced a fear of complaining due to the risk of visa revocation (Duangpracha, 2012; Ryan et al., 2016). The National Union of Students (NUS) and Anglicare Australia found that most students lived in rooming houses with high rent, poor maintenance, overcrowding, and loud noises (National Union of Students & Anglicare Australia, 2017).

Considering that students may face different problems in rooming houses, various studies have explored the impacts of living in them. A student wellbeing survey reported that poor housing conditions impacted international students' study (Rickwood et al., 2016).

Obeng-Odoom (2012) indicated that Australian international students faced difficulties in complaining and had conflicts with housemates. Moreover, poor living conditions in rooming houses can increase stress (Evans et al., 2000), and thus impede their study due to insufficient sleep (Dusselier et al., 2005; Wong et al., 2012).

Furthermore, Yue et al. (2014) found that some Australian international students may experience severe stress due to their negative relationships with housemates or landlords, which could impact on their wellbeing and health. Similar findings were reported by Dusselier et al. (2005), where the pressure of maintaining relationships caused stress to students. However, living in rooming houses can also help students to establish positive relationships and gain academic support from fellow students (Rienties et al., 2012). Chong and Razek (2014) found that living with students from other cultures could help students to improve communication skills and cultural sensitivity.

In South Australia, over 50% of international students study in universities (Department for Trade, Tourism and Investment, 2018), and the demand for accommodation among them is increasing (Wild & Snoswell, 2016). Although the housing experience of international students varies across Australia, little is known in the context of South Australia, and little is known about the impact of housing on international social work students' study.

#### Method

The study had two objectives: to explore the lived experience of international social work students living in rooming houses in South Australia, and to explore how living in rooming houses impacts their social work study.

#### Research methodology and paradigm

To achieve the aims, this study used an exploratory descriptive qualitative methodology to explore a phenomenon that is not fully understood from the perspectives of the international students in the context of living in rooming houses, and to describe their accounts of experiences and their significance to them (Hunter et al., 2019). Hunter et al. (2019) postulated this research approach based on Stebbins' work (2001) on exploratory research and Sandelowski's (2000) work on descriptive methodology, widely used in the health care sector. Aligned with this approach, the researcher used open-ended exploratory questions to investigate their lived experiences. This approach allowed the researcher to illuminate descriptive accounts of unique and contextual experiences and their impact on international students' social work study.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to understand participants' lived experiences. Taylor (1985, pp. 45–46) suggested that humans actively interpret their life experience, and therefore he referred to humans as "self-interpreting beings". Using IPA, descriptive lived experiences alongside meanings can be discovered from participants.

IPA acknowledges that interpretation happens when the researcher engages with the participants' transcribed text. IPA uses a two-stage interpretation process, which shows that while "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 26). Therefore, the meanings of the lived experiences are provided when researchers try to respect participants' lived experiences and search for meanings from those experiences.

## Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select international social work students who lived in rooming houses and were enrolled in social work programs in one of the universities in South Australia. The participants were 18 years old or above. There were only three participants thoughdue to limited time available to complete the undergraduate honours project. This posed limitations in selecting a large number of participants that could increase the scalability of the research findings.

Participants were recruited with written permission from the Head of School to disseminate information through emails from the university and posters on university notice boards. Therefore, they chose to participate of their free will. The researcher's student status reduced power relationships in the research. Information sheets were given to respondents before interview arrangements; these included research content, researcher's contact details, confidentiality statement, voluntary participation statement, and consent for audio-taping of the interview.

#### Data collection

Three participants volunteered to participate in the study. They were interviewed once in a private room booked at the university campus library. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, including participants' demographics, experiences of living in rooming houses, and situations where the participants' studies were impacted in rooming houses and their feelings at that moment. The question design was guided by van Manen (2016) who suggested that interview questions should be as descriptive as possible, involving life situations and emotions, to fully capture participants' lived experiences.

The interviews were digitally audio-taped with the signed consent of the participants. All data were saved in a password-protected device; only the researcher had access to the data.

#### Data analysis

A six-step IPA data analysis process (Smith et al., 2009) was used. Firstly, the researcher read the transcript of the first interview multiple times to ensure that the participant's lived experience was the focus of the analysis. Moreover, the researcher recorded his thoughts on the transcript and "bracketed them off" to focus solely on the participant's experience and reduce researcher bias (Smith et al., 2009, p. 82). Secondly, the researcher made descriptive notes on the transcript and identified the participant's perspectives and explicit meanings

by underlining words and phrases. This could ensure that the meanings were completely extracted from the participant's lived experience. This process allowed the researcher to identify "the things which matter to" the participant (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). Thirdly, the researcher identified some emerging themes according to the descriptive notes. The themes were also linked back to the original transcript to ensure an accurate understanding of the participant's experience. Fourthly, the researcher identified the relations and connections between the different themes by putting similar themes together. In the fifth step, the researcher repeated the first four steps to analyse another interview before the next interview was conducted to maintain the integrity of the data analysis process, and remove bias in the interpretation of the individual participant's data.

Finally, the researcher identified the common themes across all interviews and produced the main themes that were related to the research questions, which are the lived experiences of living in rooming houses among international social work students and the impacts of these on their social work study.

## Rigor

To establish the reliability and trustworthiness of this research, the principal researcher was responsible for conducting and transcribing the interview; the transcriptions were checked by an independent researcher by listening to the recording to ensure their accuracy. After the data analysis process, the principal researcher discussed major themes with the independent researcher who then checked all the identified themes alongside the transcriptions to ensure reliability and accuracy.

The primary researcher was also an international student who had experienced living in rooming houses before doing this research. Although IPA recognises the interpretative process when the researcher approaches the data, the primary researcher needed to avoid the influence of preconceptions and assumptions. To achieve that, the researcher followed the principle that researchers "should shift back and forth, focusing on personal assumptions and then returning to looking at participants' experience in a fresh way" (Finlay, 2009, p. 13). Therefore, the researcher was always self-reflective, kept a journal, and examined his subjective experience.

As a student, the primary researcher had ongoing discussions and consultations with the independent researcher who is an experienced researcher and not an international student. This process ensured the reliability and trustworthiness of the research.

## **Ethical considerations**

This research was approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committees. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to replace participants' real names in this study.

#### Results

The participants' demographic details are presented next. Five themes emerged from the data analysis: struggling to share space with housemates; struggling to interact and maintain relationships with housemates; feeling powerless as a tenant; lack of control of a noisy environment; and similarities among housemates helped to build positive relationships and enhance studying. The lived experience of participants across all themes had varying degrees of impact on their social work study.

## Participant demographics

Three adult students aged 20–25 were recruited, namely: Joanne (a female from Indonesia), John (a male from China) and Katie (a female from China). They were studying for a Master of Social Work degree and had been living in South Australia for two to three years. Joanne lived in three rooming houses, John lived in one rooming house, and Katie lived in two rooming houses, during their study.

## Struggling to share space with housemates

Participants experienced difficulties in using shared space, such as kitchens and toilets, and sharing household cleaning responsibilities equally. This caused unpleasant feelings of anger and frustration, resulting in a lack of time to study for some participants.

Joanne shared her experience of sharing house-cleaning responsibilities with her housemates. Although a cleaning roster was established, she found it hard to maintain the house cleanliness fairly:

...It was kind of unfair for me, because when it was my duty, I clean it until you can see it, but for them, they are doing the minimal effort.

John also had a similar experience. Although he tried to talk with his housemates about cleanliness, he felt frustrated when it was not followed through:

...I am unhappy and become angry about it, I try to talk about it with them, they will throw the rubbish and clean the kitchen maybe in the next two weeks, but after that, ok, same as before.

He further described how he had to spend extra time cleaning that impacted on his social work study.

...I have to learn to improve my English, not only my uni tasks and organisational tasks [while on placement]..., so, if I spend too much time on cleaning, you know, that's less time to be allocated to my study.

In Katie's situation, when she identified that the landlord was the person who made the toilet dirty, she felt frustrated as it was an unpleasant experience:

...She [the landlord] actually doesn't keep it clean...There was one time, I came shortly after she came out, oh [it was dirty], actually, at first, I talked with her about this thing, and she said, maybe the other housemate, so, you know.

Using shared space also impacted other aspects of participants' lives. Joanne described how she had to skip her dinner because the kitchen was occupied by her landlord and his friends. She explained the situation:

...I want to go down and fetch my own food, but I don't want to disturb them [the landlord and his friends], I don't want to come down and have to make awkward conversations with them, so, at times, when they did that, sometimes I had to skip my dinner, and then, but yeah, I kept snacks in my room, but it's just snacks.

## Struggling to interact and maintain relationships with housemates

When participants were describing their relationships with their housemates, they shared how they had struggled to interact with them.

Joanne described how having different schedules with housemates was challenging in interacting with them. She captured this by saying:

...To be a friend, you have to have time together, right? And our schedules are all over the place... so yeah, it's a bit challenging.

On the other hand, she indicated that the language barrier impeded her interaction with housemates from another country and caused awkwardness for her:

...because they are kind of from the same background, so when they converse together [in housemates' mother language], I can just sit there, and just like, huh, I feel kind of singled out...my feeling was awkward...I don't know whether they are talking about me.

In Katie's experience, cultural differences also concerned her in interacting with her housemate from another country. She said:

...It's hard to joke about this thing [to the housemate from another country], sometimes I just don't want to be offensive, just to be sensitive about this thing.

John tended to avoid arguments with his housemates to maintain the relationships. When talking about his housemates making noises that impacted him, he described it by saying:

...I would become so frustrated...I can say I want to argue with them immediately, but you know, as I said, I don't want to break our friendship, so I just control my emotions.

For John specifically, maintaining his positive relationships with his housemates also had an impact on his study because of spending extra time to help them:

...Sometimes, I have to sacrifice my time and energy to maintain the relationships with my roommates...one of my roommate's grammar is not good, so after he finishes his essay, he would ask me to check the grammar...it will spend me two hours, that means, you know, decreases my time on my study.

## Feeling powerless as a tenant

Participants described that they were treated by their landlords unfairly. However, they had to accept it because the landlords had power over them. This experience also impacted on their social work study. Joanne described a situation where her landlord forced her to leave in only two days because of some arguments. She said:

...She shouted at me...she said: I want you out, out of this house by Sunday. It was Friday...I was also angry at her, because she couldn't do that to me, just because I am paying rent to your house, I am not living in your house for free...the whole experience was horrendous.

Joanne continued to talk about how this experience impacted her social work placement:

...I moved to Airbnb for 10 days, it cost me a lot of money, Airbnb is not cheap, so, obviously...it was depressing, it was stressful, that was the end of my placement, I had my final placement interview coming up, so, can you imagine?

Similarly, John described how he had to change his study timetable to fit his landlord's regular inspection on Friday:

...We tried to talk to him [the landlord] about our concern, can we change it to another day to have the inspection, he didn't agree with it...so, ok, on Thursday, we have to clean our house, and Friday, we have to be with him in the house. Actually, it influences our study, because normally you know, we prefer to study in the library, or the house [during weekdays], it may partly influence our efficiency.

On the other hand, Katie described her experience of sharing the bathroom with her landlord, and this meant giving her landlord's need a higher priority than hers. She described:

...We reached an agreement that she will shower before nine o'clock...so I do shower after that, but even though, she still will come up with me sometimes...she has a lot of reasons... so several times after, I asked her like would you mind let me know what time do you want to do shower today, and I would just do it before or after, just let you choose the time first.

# Lack of control of the noisy environment

All participants expressed that the noisy environment in rooming houses was not in their control and impacted on their social work study. Joanne narrated her feelings and suffering from noises due to her landlord having parties during weekends:

...When it gets really bad, sometimes I went to the uni, to the library to work on my assignments, and it did impact the study, not as in my grades, but, what do you call it? the easiness to do that. I should have been doing that in the comfort of my room, right? because my stuff is in there in my room, I want to do it in my room, but because they are so noisy, it did impact on the process of my study.

She continued to describe her feelings:

...Frustration to anger, because they shouldn't do that, they know that we both were students, we need our quiet time...they didn't respect the fact that being a student... and there is a pressure that, huh, I need to get this [assignments] done, and I need to go out [to the library to avoid noises], but it could be raining and something like that, it's just, I don't know how to describe it, it's frustrating all over.

Likewise, John indicated that he suffered noise from his landlord sending workers to do the gardening early in the morning. These noises impacted on his sleep and his ability to concentrate on placement as a non-English-speaking student. Furthermore, this situation also led to embarrassing situations where he had to ask his field educator questions for clarification during placement:

...When I attend some meetings [at the placement], I have to pay one hundred per cent attention towards the leaders...but if I don't have enough sleep, it's hard for me to focus on their words, so you know, I can't get anything from the meeting, it will influence my work, I have to ask my field educator again, oh, like what we have talked about...it's quite [embarrassing] because it lets my field educator [think], oh, this guy, maybe you know, not good at English.

Katie also suffered due to noises from her housemates that impacted on her study; meanwhile, she also struggled with expressing her concern to the housemate. Katie stated:

...He [a housemate] often talks with phone quite loudly, and this is very annoying... I just let him know that, like, sorry, I am concentrating on my study, and it's a bit disturbing, but actually, it's very disturbing, and I just want to minimise it [conflicts with the housemate].

## Similarities among housemates help build positive relationships and enhance studying

Participants expressed that similarities, such as interest, identity, and culture, between them and their housemates, helped them to establish good relationships.

#### Joanne:

We have similar interests, we like movies, and then cartoon, and then games... so we bonded really easily...and we are here renting a room, it's a similar identity.

## John:

The most important aspect is that we are all from China, so we would have a sense of living in my own country.

#### Katie:

We came from the same country, sometimes we would talk about our different customs... it's also good for our relationship because we have some topics to talk about.

Furthermore, Joanne expressed that living with another student studying the same social work program helped her learning a lot:

All of these social work aspects were very new to me, and having someone that has done the first year of the study helps me a lot because she gave me all these insights.

Although John did not live with other social work students before, he also expressed similar thoughts when he reflected on what could have helped his social work study:

I think it's better to live with other students from, like study the same subject with you...it's just like support each other, not only from the emotional aspect but from the practical aspect.

## Discussion

This study explored international social work students' lived experience in rooming houses in South Australia and its impacts on their study. The findings revealed that participants struggled to share space with their housemates (Theme 1). The major difficulty was the equal sharing of house-cleaning responsibility. This finding corroborates other studies where researchers found cleanliness being a major issue when tenants shared toilets and kitchens (Anderson et al., 2003), and students had different standards of cleanliness (Holton, 2016). Moreover, this study also found that added house-cleaning time meant less time to study.

Maintaining positive relationships with housemates is important (Theme 2). However, different schedules, language barriers, and cultural differences were challenging for some participants. These findings are consistent with previous studies where busy timetables impeded students seeing each other regularly (Tian, 2019); people using their home languages challenged interactions (Finchilescul et al., 2007); international students may be afraid of causing offence when interacting with people from another country (Avery & Steingard, 2008; Hyde & Ruth, 2002); and maintaining housemate relationships created pressure among participants (Dusselier et al., 2005). Distinctively, this study found that this pressure also had

a noticeable impact on international students' social work study, because they had to spend extra time helping their housemates to build relationships, potentially having negative influences on international students' study time.

Participants' lived experience of being powerless was identified when they were negotiating with their landlords (Theme 3) regarding time for house inspections, the use of common space, and maintaining the tenancy period. This finding revealed unfair treatment received by international students from landlords, which is similar to other studies in Australia (Obeng-Odoom, 2012; Ryan et al., 2016). However, this study expands the literature by illustrating that international students feel vulnerable and powerless when they are having conflicts or negotiating with landlords; this results in changing schedules of study and stress to accommodate demands from both landlords and the university.

A lack of control over the noisy environment (Theme 4) in the house was the most common lived experience among participants. The noises reduced their study efficiency in their private rooms. Lack of sleep due to loud noise reduced their ability to concentrate on their study, in both social work placement and classrooms. The finding corroborates previous studies that found that international students had insufficient sleep in rooming houses (Dusselier et al., 2005), and poor sleep quality caused poor academic functioning (Wong et al., 2012).

Although participants' experiences were mostly negative, the similarities between housemates' cultural backgrounds and enrolment in similar study programs helped them to build positive relationships with others (Theme 5), which also led to positive learning outcomes. Previous studies showed that common interests helped housemates to build relationships (McNamara & Connell, 2007), and sharing similar identities could also make people more comfortable with less "personal space" (Novelli et al., 2010), which may lead to the positive relationship developments in rooming houses shown in the findings. The positive feelings of international students living with co-national tenants may also provide reasons for the trend that international students tended to form friendships with co-national people, as suggested in previous studies (Hendrickson et al., 2011; Neri & Ville, 2008). Furthermore, this study expanded the view that living with students studying the same program could enhance international students' learning, which may not have been explored yet.

## Limitations and future research

Although this study extends the literature on international social work students' lived experience in rooming houses and its impacts on their study, limitations were identified. Firstly, this study recruited a small sample size. This research was a time-limited project and was conducted during the busiest time for most students doing their placements, and therefore it was difficult to recruit students. While an in-depth analysis of data illuminated three students' lived experiences, the findings do not necessarily represent the majority of international students in social work programs. Secondly, there was a lack of cultural diversity among participants due to the small sample size. Recruiting participants from diverse cultural backgrounds may have generated different perspectives and inspirations that could have brought further insights.

While a comprehensive account of lived experience was achieved using IPA, future studies could use a quantitative method to capture a large amount of data in examining similar topics. Future research can also further this study by investigating different strategies and skills used by international students to overcome difficulties in rooming houses and reduce their impacts on their study.

### Conclusion

This study explored the international social work students' lived experience in rooming houses and investigated their impacts on their social work study. While positive lived experiences were found, the data analysis revealed that participants' lived experience in rooming houses had various negative impacts on their social work study in both placement and general study, such as impacting the efficiency of study, reducing the time allocated to study, causing extra emotional stress during placement, and reducing the ability to concentrate due to insufficient sleep. This study's title, "Sorry, I am concentrating on my study", captured participants' feelings when they wanted to focus only on their study, but, at the same time, they had to handle conflicts with their landlords or housemates in a respectful manner.

This study has potential implications for social work educators and universities at large. Educators making efforts to understand students' experiences and helping them to improve their situations can maintain student retention (Cole et al., 2010). This study provides inspiration for planning more support services for international students outside classrooms to assist their study.

Beyond the university context, social workers could act as educators or advocates to deliver information about tenants' rights to students and support them in protecting those rights. At the policy level, currently, there is no specific legislation to cover rooming houses as a special type of accommodation, but rooming houses must follow the provisions of the Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (South Australia Government, 2020). The Australian Government may need to explore how to ensure that the policy is implemented effectively, thus protecting tenants' rights. Given that international students are a major source of revenue in the Australian economy, protecting students' rights and ensuring that they are welcomed in this country could help Australia become more competitive in the global education market.

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