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## Deakin students' housing woes revealed

Geelong university students are seeking legal advice as the rental crisis pushes young people into dodgy rooming houses.

**Tamara McDonald** 

 @TamaraMcDonald3  2 min read September 21, 2023 - 3:00PM Geelong Advertiser  7 comments



Council to Homeless Persons CEO Deborah Di Natale. Picture: Amanda Parkinson

### Geelong

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Deakin University students are finding themselves stuck living in poor conditions in rooming houses, amid calls to address the housing crisis.

The Deakin Student Legal Service (DSLS) told a state parliamentary inquiry into the rental and housing affordability crisis barriers experienced by students when seeking legal assistance included housing affordability, disputes with their landlord or rental provider and delays in hearing dates with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

"A large number of Deakin University students are residing in rooming houses, where

conditions are often very poor (living with mould, overcrowding and lack of cleanliness) but who feel as if there are no affordable alternatives," the

submission said.

"The students often express that even rooming house rent is becoming very expensive.

"Students have expressed this is affecting their mental health and by extension, their studies."

Since January 2020, the DSLS had provided more than 200 legal services to Deakin

students on housing related matters, of which 4 per cent were either at risk of being homeless or were experiencing homelessness, the submission said.

The submission said rental providers frequently requested students move out of the property without giving the correct notice period.

"This is highly stressful and concerning for students who struggle to not only find suitable properties but to do so within invalid notice periods and tight time frames," it said.

DSLS is a partnership between Eastern Community Legal Centre, Barwon Community Legal Service (BCLS) and the Deakin University Student Association.

BCLS has assisted more than 20 Deakin students from local campuses for tenancy related matters so far this year.

The main housing issues were related to rooming houses, BCLS chief executive Bryanna Connell said.





Barwon Community Legal Service CEO Bryanna Connell. Picture: Brad Fleet

She said international students were most likely to take up rooming house accommodation, but were more vulnerable to unscrupulous landlords as many were not fluent in English and not accustomed to Australian law.

Deakin Residential Services (DRS) chief executive Marion Grey said DRS offered emergency housing for students if they were experiencing homelessness or required a crisis response.

She said DRS provided on-campus accommodation, housing up to 2700 residents across its four campuses.

"Regular market valuations in Burwood, Melbourne and Geelong ensure that our on-campus rental rates are below market value," she said.

"There has been ongoing availability at both of our Geelong residences during this 2023 year.

"In addition, DRS provides an off-campus housing service ... allowing only Deakin students to source off-campus living options with landlords and providers if on-campus is not their preference."

"Any complaints received in relation to breaches of the Residential Tenancy Act result in the dwelling being removed from the database immediately and black-listed to protect students."

Council to Homeless Persons chief executive Deborah Di Natale said some of the [dramatic jump in people living in rooming houses in](#) some areas of Geelong was likely to include students.

"Too many rooming houses are simply unacceptable accommodation but increasingly we're seeing people left with no choice," she said.

"We need dedicated housing for young people to ensure disadvantaged students and others have access to safe and stable accommodation."

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