



SUIHAA

Sydney University International House Alumni Association

Dear IH Alumni

I am writing to let you know some shocking news about the future of International House. Yesterday (25 October) residents were informed officially that the university has declared the IH buildings to be at the end of their lives and that current residents would be ‘temporarily’ relocated to the [new student accommodation building in the Regiment site](#) on City Road from Semester 1, 2020. [Alumni are to receive a similar message today I believe.] This is the massively disappointing outcome of planning efforts by the IH Council over a decade, and advocacy by SUIHAA in recent years. The University has not engaged with the IH community to plan its future. Nor is there any indication when or even if this temporary relocation will end.

The Regiment building does not offer the infrastructure which facilitates the IH program, culture and way of life. There is no shared dining hall – it is a self-catered facility. Farewell to our much celebrated round tables. There is no Wool Room for major events and activities. Staff will not be located in the building but in a separate, secure administrative block. And so on. IH staff, residents and alumni are now being asked for methods by which they can sustain the IH program in a building unfit for purpose.

Honi Soit broke the news earlier in the week, including comments from Brianna Watson (IHMA Chair) and me (as SUIHAA President) <http://honisoit.com/2018/10/international-house-to-be-demolished/>. The residents’ Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/237780931045/posts/10155555436981046>) is already generating many hits and comments, with the **hashtag #saveIH** being the one to watch – and to use in your own social media please.

The IH community is working hard for the future of IH. SUIHAA has a two-strand action plan:

- Communication, media and advocacy
- Research and action to preserve the Rotunda (Walter Bunning designed)

Please contact us if you can help in either of these areas. Please email suihaa@sydney.edu.au using the heading ‘IH future’ or ‘#saveIH’

Best wishes to you all

Ros (Wood) Madden

Rosamond Madden AM PhD
President, Sydney University International House Alumni Association
president@suihaa.org.au

ATTACHED:

- Information on how this has happened and the planning and advocacy efforts so far
- The Alumni celebratory document outlining IH history achievements and some thoughts on the future



IH Future: story and actions so far

Here SUIHAA outlines:

- The history of the House, its successes and its value to the University
- Concerns about the future of the House and the risks it now faces
- Some of the SUIHAA Committee's actions.

International House: a gem in the University's crown for 50 years

International House (IH) has been a great success for 50 years – of value to its members and 6,000 alumni, a credit to its founders and adding lustre to the University.

It was founded on **visionary collaboration**, with financing from **students and donors**: SRC, Rotary, foreign, national and state governments, and private donors. The University provided land.

The twin aims of the IH constitution are to provide a hall of residence with associated programs, and to promote friendship and understanding among people of different cultures, in the House, the University and the wider community. IH represents a best practice model of empowering domestic and international students to be open-minded, nurturing global exchange, and promoting mutual respect. IH residential-based academic and social programs play an important role in creating opportunities for domestic and international students to mix and mingle.

The 50th anniversary of IH in 2017 drew together alumni, University and community leaders in celebrating the achievements of IH and its **significant contemporary relevance** [e.g. Box 1].

The current crisis: ten years in the making

The IH Council has tried to plan, for some ten years alerting the University to the need for redevelopment of IH, in recognition of the age of the buildings and the potential to expand the size of the House and enhance its links with the University and community. Costed options have been offered to the University and rejected.

The University has not adequately engaged with IH on planning IH future. After other options were rejected, a major refurbishment was done, to allow 5 years for planning – years that are almost expired.

The University is building other new accommodation. At a time when the University is focussing afresh on the student experience and cultural competence, it is simultaneously leaving IH (a model in these fields) to be evaluated against the cost of 'beds only' accommodation, and to be told there is no money for IH.

IH has no legal capacity to accumulate or raise funds for any development options or for a new business case to be prepared, as the University in recent years has assumed control of IH finances, subsumed any 'profits' and imposed new charges.

Dismantling the IH model? A University joint working group (with two IH members) now proposes to 'decant' IH residents to the new Regiment building in 2020, because of the state of IH buildings and the relatively high costs of major refurbishment compared to the estimated costs of full redevelopment (e.g.,

perhaps \$16m vs \$77m). Maintaining IH programs while at the Regiment building is only now being investigated. There is no plan for IH after the temporary ‘decant’.

IH location and Walter Bunning building: The IH location at a University gateway site is ideal, announcing the international focus of the University. The preservation of the Rotunda building designed by award-winning architect Walter Bunning should be investigated.

SUIHAA actions taken in 2018

Following our advertising of the merits of IH throughout 2017 (see attached Celebratory document),

- **We sought commitment from the University (DVC (Education)) to preserving the House in the short-term and in the long-term to redeveloping the House to be fit for purpose throughout the 21st century. Connections are needed** between, on the one hand, the vision and understanding of the IH Council and Alumni and the positive statements of the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor in 2017, and, on the other hand, the understanding of those tasked with managing the University’s physical infrastructure.
- IH has much to offer the University’s **understanding of the ‘student experience’**. Residents, alumni and staff could contribute to the consultations that we understand are under way.
- **We argued that IH can do much if it is enabled to help itself.** For example, if fundraising or investment is required, a University commitment to the future is needed. Historically, the House has been able to raise and repay money by itself. What is the potential for the University to invest in the House and also enable the House independently to raise funds?
- **SUIHAA met with two (different) Deputy Vice Chancellors in 2017 and 2018.** Over the two years alumni involved in these meetings were Michael Hwang, Allan Moss, Philayrath Phongsavan, Sid Gray, Dominick Ng and me. **We wrote in July to the DVC (Education) after our meeting with her that we would ‘welcome a commitment from the University to the future of IH, to its physical redevelopment in fit-for-purpose buildings in the same or an equivalent precinct as currently, and to collaborative processes that would ensure its character and principles are sustained and its programs developed to capitalise on its achievements. Such a commitment by the end of 2018 would enable positive communications to be made to alumni, prospective residents and to the wider community about the next era of International House.’**

Contact:

Rosamond Madden AM PhD
President, Sydney University International House Alumni Association
president@suihaa.org.au Ph: +61 409 767 266