



*SHORT POSITION PAPER FOR THE PAULINE
COMMUNITY
ON UNDERGRADUATE COMMUNITY REMAINING ALL-
MALE*

AUGUST 2021

Introduction

As part of the St Paul's College Council's continuing consultation on whether the undergraduate community should become fully co-residential, two position papers have been developed which present a summary of the key arguments which have been advanced in support of each case. Please find below the paper advancing the case for remaining all-male in the undergraduate community. This paper should be read alongside the alternate paper advancing the case for St Paul's becoming fully co-residential.

The Council has committed to make a decision on this issue, one way or the other, before the end of 2021 and will be basing its decision on evaluation of the cases outlined in these papers.

The consultation process thus far has demonstrated that there are a wide variety of opinions on this subject within our community. There is also a variety of opinions on this issue within the Council of St Paul's and not every argument presented here would represent the personal convictions of each member of Council. Nevertheless, the Council as a whole has endorsed sharing these papers with the Pauline community to ensure all interested parties are aware of the issues the Council will be taking into account when reaching its decision.

If you would like to contribute feedback on these arguments please do so via the email address: consultation@stpauls.edu.au

St Paul's College Council

The Case for Remaining All-Male

There are numerous reasons to maintain our all-male undergraduate community, ranging from the specific focus that can be given to developing young men in a collegiate environment to distinctive market differentiation.

The Case from Student Experience

The high satisfaction with the all-male undergraduate student experience at St Paul's is evidenced by the high retention rate of students through their degree. Currently the College has one of the highest retention rates of any college in the country with over 95% of students returning from first to second year and 80% returning for third year and beyond. This can be attributed to the close bond that is formed within the all-male fraternal community. The preference for the status quo is demonstrated by the fact that the 2021 Students' Club Committee has written to the Council, supported by a majority of students, expressing their desire for the community to remain unchanged.

The all-male undergraduate environment is tremendously enjoyable as can be attested to by generations of Paulines. Extremely strong bonds are formed among the student body and life-long friendships are often the result. Students being the same gender and generally from a similar background makes forming these bonds easier as they have more in common. Being all male provides students opportunities to pursue activities beyond gender stereotypes, such as representing the College in Palladian group dance, drama or vocal performances. There is a potential danger for male Paulines that the introduction of females into the undergraduate student body may make them less inclined to take these opportunities if they have to compete against women for them. In a similar way, the all-male environment at St Paul's makes young men feel safer to take the opportunities to explore faith and have ethical discussions which the College's Anglican foundation provides. These explorations may be perceived to be less socially acceptable in a co-residential environment.

The undergraduate community has close relationships with the two female-only Colleges on campus and the geographic location next to The Women's College has meant that there is a long history of Paul's and Women's working and socialising together; examples range from shared tutorials to combined outreach work and the Students' Club Committee has been promoting additional structured social interaction with both Women's and Sancta. This arrangement provides the "best of both worlds" in relation to co-residency because relationships across gender lines can be built while also maintaining the particular benefits of being single-sex colleges. Whilst they might appreciate the benefits of tertiary *co-education*, not every young man (or young woman, for that matter) prefers *co-residency*. As with girls at Women's or Sancta, young men can return to their home at St Paul's and can relax together without pressure to perform in front of the opposite sex.

The Case to become Australia's Leading Institution Promoting Positive Masculinity

As the number of tertiary institutions that cater solely to the formation of young men declines around the world, St Paul's is in a remarkable position to be the nation's leader in the development and promotion of positive masculinity. Not only is this a gap in the tertiary sector at present, it is something that is desperately needed as a counter-balance to the notion of toxic masculinity. As an all-male institution the College can focus all its energy on developing good men in a civilised and civilising environment.

The Case from Providing Choice

St Paul's is currently the only all-male undergraduate college at Sydney University. Young adults who seek collegiate experience at the University of Sydney currently have a choice between single-sex or co-residential living. Being the only college that offers the all-male experience provides market differentiation between St Paul's and other co-residential colleges on campus. A number of students chose St Paul's *because* it is all-male and this advantage would be lost if it were to accept women. St Paul's becoming co-residential would remove the option for male students to attend an all-male college at Sydney University.

The Case for Opportunity for Men

If St Paul's were to become fully co-residential, there would be fewer college places across campus for male students. Currently, 55.9% of Sydney University undergraduate students are women and across the six University Colleges, there are approximately 55% college rooms for women and 45% for men. If St Paul's were to move to being fully co-residential, this ratio would shift to 64.7% female and 35.2% male. On current college numbers, fewer than 600 of approximately 1600 undergraduate college places would be available to male undergraduates. St Paul's remaining all-male in the undergraduate community would ensure that there is approximate alignment between the gender composition of the University and that of the colleges.

The Case from Academic Success

St Paul's has traditionally had a culture of high academic achievement. At a time when, both nationally and internationally, female tertiary students significantly outnumber and outperform their male counterparts, it is more important than ever to foster a culture of academic success and intellectual enquiry in all-male institutions.

Students have indicated that the all-male environment at St Paul's means that there is less distraction in the College which allows them to focus more on their study. A single sex environment enhances the opportunities for success at University because it offers young men and young women some "time out" from each other. St Paul's continues to have an extremely strong tutorial programme which is overwhelmingly taught by the young men of the College. This is a remarkable opportunity for high academic achievers to teach their fellow Paulines and the opportunities for men to be tutors could be reduced if the College moved to co-residency as women would become tutors too.

The Case from Present Enrolments

2021 had the biggest intake of new students in the College's history and enrolments for 2022 are proceeding at an encouraging level. This indicates a strong demand from undergraduate men for places at St Paul's. The students who enjoy their College experience are the best recruiters of new students, so increasing enrolments bodes well for higher application numbers in years to come.

The Case from the Impact on Sydney University All-Female Colleges

A move by St Paul's to become co-residential would have a serious detrimental impact on the two all-female Colleges. This concern was raised in a letter opposing the change written to the Council of St Paul's by The Women's College House Committee. There are currently many opportunities for the all-female Colleges to interact and socialise with St Paul's men which would inevitably diminish with the introduction of women to Paul's. There may also be a negative impact on their enrolments as more Colleges compete to attract the best female students into their communities.

Objections to Going Co-residential

The undergraduates at St Paul's have always been all-male, despite the establishment of Graduate House as a co-residential community in 2019. To move the undergraduate community to being fully co-residential would be an irreversible shift in one of the fundamental defining aspects of the College. The strong connection and shared experience of those who have attended St Paul's is one of the things that bonds Paulines across the generations. Becoming co-residential in the undergraduate community would be a break with 165 years of tradition and would undermine the strength of this sense of connection for future generations.

St Paul's students hold one another to a high standard and there is a potential that the introduction of women will undermine these traditions. There is no evidence from other Sydney University Colleges that moving to co-residency will add to this tradition or enhance the College's culture.

The argument that co-residency will broaden the diversity of the College is not sound. More likely, the general socio-economic background of the students would remain the same, with students from elite private boys' schools simply being joined by students from elite private girls' schools.

The College's record of hard fought success in Rawson Cup sport, undeniably one of the College's traditional defining characteristics and rallying points, will inevitably suffer should the College become co-residential.

Whilst co-residency would mean talented women would be able to benefit from Paul's, every place taken by a woman will deny a talented man a place at Paul's. And the admission of women would halve the number of places available to men each year. At the same time, there would most likely be considerable costs associated with adaption of College facilities to the needs of women. Furthermore, the inclusion of women would introduce a raft of new pastoral care issues.

Notwithstanding the impact of Covid 19, the College is in an excellent place, as indicated by outstanding examination results, highly successful social and sporting activities and strong enrolments for 2022.

St Paul's College is already in effect *co-educational*, but not *co-residential*. A change to co-residency may have unintended or unforeseen consequences such as a detrimental effect on philanthropic support for the College. Rather than go down this irreversible path, we can work on enhancing our fine institution and build on all that is good and special about the College.