



*SHORT POSITION PAPER FOR THE PAULINE  
COMMUNITY  
ON UNDERGRADUATE CO-RESIDENCY*

*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 moving to full co-residency. This paper should be read alongside the alternate paper advancing the case for remaining all-male in the undergraduate community.

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](mailto:consultation@stpauls.edu.au)

St Paul's College Council

# The Case for Becoming Fully Co-residential

There are numerous reasons that St Paul's should begin welcoming women as full members of the Undergraduate College. These reasons range from the benefit to students' educative outcomes, equality of opportunity and the College's standing as an academic community and valuable institution to Australian society.

## *The Case from Student Benefits*

Students living and learning in a co-residential environment provides a richer experience and better preparation for life beyond College. Working together across genders on equal terms and in constructive ways to solve problems and achieve goals is now virtually ubiquitous in workplaces. St Paul's being co-residential will better equip our students for this future. Relating across genders in a normalized (non-sexualised) manner, including resolving issues without artifice and in continued peaceful co-existence, will accelerate the formation that college provides. As most of our undergraduate students have attended all-boy schools prior to St Paul's, normalizing gender relationships for this demographic would be of greater benefit than limiting exposure.

A wider pool of applicants to select from would provide greater opportunities for the College to continue to achieve excellence in academic, cultural, social and outreach activities. A community of the "best and the brightest" will spur those in the community onto even greater heights. Moreover, it is hoped a more representative student body will provide a natural curb to anti-social behaviours and mindsets.

## *The Case from Equality of Opportunity*

St Paul's strives to offer the best collegiate experience in the country. It has outstanding facilities, academic support, pastoral care and opportunities. The bursary program is one of the largest in the country. While the College has a close relationship with The Women's College next door, this does not provide equality of opportunity between the genders in the management and organisation of activities held or run at St Paul's. As St Paul's, in general, has better facilities for interaction, most joint activities are at St Paul's (e.g. Salisbury Bar, Wine Cellar Lunch, Mixed Touch Football etc.). This entails an inherent asymmetry where most opportunities for inter-gender collegiate activities takes place at the men's invitation. There is no opportunity for women to be on the Salisbury syndicate or run the wine cellar. This is potentially disempowering and structurally unhelpful for promoting gender equality.

## *The Case from Greater Diversity*

Moving to undergraduate co-residency will provide broader representation on the basis of gender and more opportunity for multiple points of view to enrich the life and educative experience of students. Over the last several decades the vast majority of St Paul's students have come from a small number of all-boy schools. It has been the experience of other colleges that have moved to co-residency that they attract students from across a wide variety of schools, public and private, co-ed and single-sex, as well as from a broader range of socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, moving to co-residency is likely to not only increase the diversity of gender, but also the various demographics and backgrounds within those genders. Greater demand for places at St Paul's and therefore increased selection of students into the College will also provide opportunities for broader representation. Working with other students that are not from the same cultural, socio-economic and schooling background is vital preparation for a workforce that values diversity and inclusion.

## *The Case from Foundational Purpose*

St Paul's was established as the Anglican College for the University of Sydney. It was established in 1856 when there were only male students. Now 58% of Sydney University undergraduate students are female and they have no opportunity to attend the Anglican College for the University of Sydney.

## *The Case from Tradition*

The College has an outstanding history of producing society's leaders across fields from politics, academics and business. In order to maintain this tradition through the twenty-first century St Paul's needs to be equipping and shaping women, along with men, to take their place as Australia's leaders into the future. Furthermore, the College prides itself in standing in the Oxbridge tradition, yet no Oxbridge college has remained all-male.

### *The Case from Perception*

As one of the only all-male collegiate communities remaining in the world, St Paul's suffers from a perception of being anachronistic and chauvinistic. Almost all of the College's students have attended all-boy schools and it currently struggles, despite significant effort, to attract students who have experienced co-educational high school. Furthermore, based on recent anecdotal evidence a co-residential collegiate experience seems to be more desirable for a significant cohort of students, which even includes those who have attended all-boy schools. Becoming fully co-residential will align the College more closely with community expectations about how a collegiate experience should look as well as benchmarking against international best practice. Furthermore, as the College already operates Graduate House as a co-residential community it will provide consistency across the institution for the undergraduate community to also be co-residential.

### *The Business Case*

Moving to undergraduate co-residency will most probably result in a significant strengthening of the College as a business. It will more than double the potential pool of applicants for St Paul's. Having more students applying will enable greater selection of students. St Paul's reputation as an institution that only accepts "the best and the brightest" will, in turn, lead to stronger demand. This is desirable as St Paul's needs to increase its application numbers in order to ensure all rooms in the College are filled, as it is financially detrimental to have empty rooms. Not only is there a financial burden of having vacancies but there is also an opportunity cost for potential students who would benefit from the St Paul's experience.

Moving to full co-residency will also open up greater opportunities for efficiencies across the College. St Paul's already operates Graduate House as a co-residential community and there will be numerous operational efficiencies for the organization by moving to full co-residency. Moreover, there will be many marketing efficiencies through being co-residential. Most schools are co-educational and it will be of great benefit to market to the entire student body rather than a portion of them.

### *Responses to Objections to Co-residency*

Some of the more common objections to St Paul's moving to undergraduate co-residency relate to perceived responsibilities the College has beyond itself. One such objection is that this move will diminish the number of college places at the University of Sydney for men. In response to this, we can point out that St Paul's has recently more than doubled in population size so even moving to being fully co-residential there would still be more places at St Paul's for men than it had for its first 160 years. Furthermore, the fact that the College needs to recruit students from other universities highlights that there is an abundance of places for University of Sydney men.

Another objection to co-residency highlights the need to provide choice for male students who want to live in a men-only college. This is not a choice offered at the overwhelming number of universities across Australia or at Oxbridge. Furthermore, a number of the students who are accepted at St Paul's were hoping to be accepted at a co-residential college. Another way to pose this question of choice is whether female undergraduates at the University of Sydney should have the choice to apply to St Paul's with its excellent facilities, programs and being the only Anglican College on campus. The potential impact this move could have on neighbouring colleges that are currently all-female is posed as a reason for not moving in this direction.

In response to the suggestion that co-residency will cause St Paul's ability in Rawson to suffer, it should be pointed out that in 9 of the last 10 years the cup has been won by a co-residential college. Also, in response to the suggestion that there will be a raft of new pastoral care issues with the introduction of women it is important to remember that St Paul's already has female students in Graduate House and has a strong record of caring for them.

It has been suggested that this is the biggest change to St Paul's in 165 years, however, it should be remembered that the College crossed the threshold of accepting female graduate students with the opening of Graduate House in 2019. The success of this co-residential Pauline community is evidence of the benefits of this move. There is no evidence of institutions that are co-educational/co-residential becoming all-male, the move is only in the other direction. If being all-male was better, why are no institutions begun or transformed into this model? The move to becoming fully co-residential should be welcomed by the Pauline community as the best way forward for the College to continue to be an institution that makes a remarkable impact in the University and wider Australian society.