

I enrolled to the University of Melbourne in 2004 from Hong Kong. Before I arrived Melbourne, my agent in Hong Kong gave me a list of housing option which include all the major student apartment housing on Swanston Street and its surrounds for example CMC, CSA, College Square, College House, Bouverie Residece, Arrow On Swanston. And I chose Arrow On Swanston.

The living expenses in Arrow cost me about 300 per week. I had to share a tiny self-contained apartment with another person. Arrow had more than 30 units on each level. It has hundreds of students however, apart from the friends I went to school with, I hardly knew any of my neighbours because I just didn't know where to start from. After five months, I moved out of Arrow when my contract is over.

After moving out of Arrow, I moved in with a home-stay family in Brunswick. The living expenses back then was \$200 per week plus tram fare. It was a very lovely experience as my home-stay family was very supportive. I also got to play with the kids and learn more about Australian culture. However, after a semester I decided to move out because I've always wanted to live in a residential college.

I moved into Ridley College in the following semester. My living cost back then was about 390 per week after scholarship. I was offered a single room but I had to share bathroom, toilet and laundry facilities with the entire floor. I met a lot of people and friends there. I participated in inter college competitions, internal activities such as supper nights, op shop ball and tutorial program. I truly felt like I was part of a community when I was living in Ridley. But I had to move out unwillingly after a semester as Ridley College stopped operating as a university residential college after 2005.

I am now sharing an apartment in Carlton with a friend. The living expenses right now is about \$210 per week. And I just recently found that it's still overpriced. A friend from Ridley told me that she is paying \$90 per week for an apartment in East Brunswick. She was shocked when I told her I am paying \$160 per week for rent. However, living in East Brunswick will require tram-ing to University and as international students are not eligible for concession for public transport. On balance moving to Brunswick just does not worth it.

Of all these housing option I have experienced, I felt like a cash cow the most when I was living in Arrow on Swanston. There was no sense of community. There was not one single Australian to interact with. Neighbours hardly know each other and the apartment was so tiny that I felt like I live like a sardine. Ridley College was the best choice of all, I truly felt like a community member because there was a lot of interaction between international, local and exchange students. It offered me a lot of invaluable experiences. Although Ridley is the best, it is also the most expensive of all options. And where I am at now is actually the cheapest. After all these years, I finally feel like I am more a community member but a little part of me will always feel like a cash cow because I always end up paying more than the others.