

HOMESTAY – FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

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Introduction

Why this document?

Thank you for becoming part of our family of homestay hosts – whether you only recently joined us, or have been with us for a while, we thank you for sharing your home and culture with international students who may be in Australia for the very first time.

As you are no doubt aware, Australia has a unique culture that differs greatly from many overseas countries. Student are not only here to earn an education, but also to experience a new way of living. You are, in reality, sharing a bit of your daily life with them.

Whilst exchanging culture is a wonderful thing for both you and students, in very rare instances misunderstandings can happen, even with each party's best intentions. This FAQ sets out, in brief and simple terms, the minimum standards of being a homestay host.

This is part of your agreement with us – please take the time to read it!

Please note this document should be read in conjunction with, and does not replace, the *Homestay Services Agreement* which you must sign as part of the conditions of being our Homestay hosts; and is part of the 'Homestay Guidelines' referred to in the *Homestay Services Agreement* to which you must abide. It is impossible to list every scenario in Homestay, therefore this document should be seen as one that establishes the minimum standards and not an exhaustive list of rules.

We hope this FAQ helps you get the most of the sharing experience – with many cultures, to become one family.

Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ)

Before your student arrives...

1. What do I need to provide as a Homestay host?

A: First and foremost, an open mind, a desire to share your life and culture with someone from another background, and willingness to accept students as part of your family!

In practice, the following are the minimum standards:

- Provide a suitable bed, with linen, blankets (appropriate for weather), pillow, and towels.
- A desk sufficiently sized for working, and a chair.
- Natural lighting – at least one window facing outside.
- Artificial lighting – including at least a desk lamp.
- Adequate heating and cooling (appropriate for weather).
- Wardrobe or similar facilities for student to place their clothing – hangers alone are insufficient.
- Working With Children Check that is current and valid (see Paragraph 2).
- Appropriate insurance (see Paragraph 33).

The overriding requirement is that the student is given a safe, clean, and reasonably comfortable private environment, free of any hazard (including electrical, structural, or natural.)

2. Do I need the 'Working With Children Check'?

A: Yes, it is a legal requirement. You and all residents in your home over the age of 18 must obtain this check. In NSW, you may use the 'volunteers' check (free of charge)

for this purpose. If all adult members of your family have this check, you must provide your WWCC number for our verification.

3. How do I become a Homestay host?

A: If you're reading this document, chances are we have already been in contact with each other. But if not, please email us (details on page 1), ensure you meet the basic requirements set out in Paragraph 1, and we'll organise a visit of your home.

This visit will last 30-45 minutes, during which we'd discuss any questions you have, get to know you and your family, and verify your premises are suitable for homestay. Please have the following ready:

- Reasonably clean and tidy condition (as we may take photographs of your student room(s), and general living area (e.g. lounge room, kitchen)**.
- WWCC and ID of all household members over 18.

***: These photos will only be used in the course of homestay operations and never made public.*

4. Do I need to tell you if my household composition has changed?

A: Yes! - You may have a child who turned 18, or a new child, new housemate, new pet, etc. You must inform us of such changes as soon as possible. This is especially important if you have a new family member who is over the age of 18 - he/she MUST obtain a valid WWCC and submit their WWCC number to us for verification. **It is illegal to engage in homestay for under-18 students if any adult member of your household does not have a valid WWCC.**

If your household has any changes that would breach any requirement from a student we placed with you, and you do not give us reasonable notice, causing the student to be moved, we reserve the right to charge you an administration fee of up to \$150.00. Examples are:

- If you bring home a dog but student requested no dog upon booking;
- If a member of your household takes up smoking

when student requested no smoking.

You must also provide an email address (and to check it regularly) to which we can send important documents, such as students' moving notices, and guideline changes.

5. How many students can I take?

A: No more than three (3) in total, from us and any other homestay agencies. You must inform us if you exceed this limit, or if you will exceed your limit by accepting a student from us when we check your availability.

6. How do students know what behaviour is expected of them?

A: Generally, our partner colleges give students guidelines on Homestay living, to which they must abide as a condition of their enrolment. Each college's requirements may differ slightly. You are, however, strongly encouraged to develop a set of 'house rules', outlining factors such as curfew, electricity/internet usage, shower time, etc. This house rule should not contradict any of our Homestay Guidelines, or any college rules. If you are in any doubt please contact us.

7. Do I need to be home when the student arrives for the first time? How about every day?

A: Yes. We will communicate the student's initial arrival date/time to you at least 48 hours in advance (if possible). If this timeframe is not feasible we would usually contact you to check if you are available to receive the student.

For students under 18, you (or a member of your household) should be at home to receive them at the end of their school day. Please see Paragraph 14 regarding your responsibility to under-18 students if you go away overnight.

8. What do I need to do on the student's first few days?

A: As a matter of priority, you should show the student

your home, discuss house rules, and understand any immediate needs (e.g. double check allergies). Before the student attends college, you should show them how to catch public transport to the college (including obtaining/charging Opal card), as well as show them relevant local amenities (e.g. supermarkets, bank).

9. Who is responsible for student's welfare in general?

A: If the student is under 18, a caregiver/guardian may be appointed. The caregiver should visit the student within a few days of their arrival in Australia, including a visit to your home. They should give you reasonable advanced notice of their visit. Please ensure you provide reasonable assistance in this regard.

The caregiver should give you their name and contact details if you have any concerns about the student's welfare and/or other issues (also see 'Dispute resolution' below.) The caregiver should perform official functions for the students, e.g. opening bank account, sign permission slips, liaise with student's college and/or family about welfare, etc.

Any welfare issues with the student you can contact us, we will act in a liaison role with the student's college/agent to resolve the issue.

You are expected to provide a basic level of on-premises supervision, as to their general wellbeing, adherence to house rules, school attendance, and curfew. The homestay environment should be that you can reasonably easily notice the student's movement within the premises without unduly breaching their privacy (e.g. if they sneak in/out, smoking). For this reason, homestays that consist of a granny flat, or hosts who regularly leave students alone at their premises at night, may be inappropriate for under-18 students.

If you have any concerns regarding supervising the student, please contact the student's caregiver (and also see Paragraph 35 regarding dispute resolution.)

Critical incidents/illness/incidents

10. If my student is sick, do I need to take them to the doctor?

A: You are generally expected to assist students who fell ill or have minor medical issues, by taking them to relevant health professionals. You must also inform the student's caregiver (if applicable) (Please also refer to Paragraph 12 for critical incidents.)

11. Do I have to pay for student's medical expenses?

A: No – student is expected to pay. If you choose to pay you are not entitled to reimbursement. They should have medical insurance as part of their student visa conditions.

12. What is a critical incident, and what should I do?

A: A critical incident is a traumatic event (or threat of such), within or outside Australia, which causes extreme levels of stress, fear, or injury. They include:

- Student missing/unable to be located;
- Severe verbal and/or physical aggression;
- Death or serious injury (or any such threats);
- Natural disaster;
- Issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, drug or alcohol abuse.

If your student is involved in a critical incident, you MUST inform immediately:

- Us (as Homestay agents);
- The student's caregiver (if applicable);
- Other security personnel as appropriate (e.g. police, fire, ambulance).

13. What if I have any concerns about the student's academic/personal issues?

A: Student may experience issues that are concerning but not immediately critical, e.g. studies, personal issues, etc. If you feel comfortable to do so you may approach the

students and seek to assist. Otherwise please contact the student's caregiver (if applicable), the college, and/or us. Please be sensitive especially in the case of personal issues, and avoid private discussions that may invite misunderstandings.

14. What if I need to go away for some time, e.g. holidays?

A: If you have under-18 students, please notify us as soon as practicable so we can arrange alternative accommodation for the student. If you wish to take your student on holidays, the student must obtain permission from their caregiver and/or their parents. **Under no circumstances can any under-18 student be left in your home either alone or with people not registered with us as part of your homestay, without prior agreement with us.**

If your student is over 18, you may do so but:

1. Only for short periods (e.g. a few nights);
2. Please discuss with student prior to ensure you and them are mutually comfortable with the arrangement; and
3. Please refrain from doing so within the first week of student's arrival, so they can settle.

Student behaviour

15. Must students observe a curfew?

A: This depends on the student's college's rules. In the absence of which, the following should generally apply. Please state this clearly in your house rules.

Student's age:	16-under 18	Under 16
Sunday – Thursday	9:00pm	7:30pm
Friday - Saturday	10:30pm	9:00pm

If student is over the age of 18, they should not be expected to observe a curfew, but his/her movement should not cause disturbance to your family, e.g. entering/exiting house or using shower late at night.

16. Can students stay elsewhere overnight?

A: If student is under 18:

- and has a caregiver - yes but only after the caregiver has given permission;
- and has no caregiver - consent can only be given by the college, not by yourself or us.

Any student who wishes to stay out overnight must inform you, and this should only happen occasionally. If you are in any doubt please contact the student's caregiver or us.

17. Can the student use our telephone for long-distance calls?

A: Students should not use your telephone without your permission, especially to make calls that incur high fees (e.g. international calls). You are advised to block such calls. We do encourage you and your student reach a reasonable understanding regarding domestic phone usage (including using their international phone card, if they have one).

18. Do I need to sign documents for the student?

A: No – as mentioned in Paragraph 9, if student is under-18, caregiver should perform official functions, including signing of contracts. You should not be obliged to sign/act as guarantor for any contracts, e.g. mobile phones, credit cards, bank accounts.

19. Do I have to accept student's family/friends visiting my home?

A: Not necessarily – homestay should only be for students, not their family/friends. You are under no obligation to receive their visit or let them stay.

Having said that, if the request is not unreasonable, it may be an opportunity for you and the student's family to establish deeper bonds with each other.

Meals/Hygiene

20. Do I have to cook every meal for students?

A: No – as a homestay host you are expected to prepare 16 meals – school days: breakfast and dinner; non-school days (e.g. weekends): breakfast, lunch (if student stays home), and dinner. Breakfast can be self-served in nature (e.g. bread and cereal).

Students are expected to inform you if they wish to skip a meal (e.g. if they stay out at night). If that notice is given, they cannot expect that meal to be prepared for them.

21. Will I know if a student has an allergy or food preferences (e.g. religious reasons)?

A: Yes – all allergies and food preferences known to us will be provided our ‘information of your homestay student’ before each student’s arrival. We may also discuss such preferences with you before allocating a student to you.

22. Must the student clean his/her own room? Can I clean it for them?

A: Students are expected to keep their room in a neat and tidy state. Please provide them with the necessary cleaning products. If you wish to clean for the student, please discuss and reach an agreement with him/her before doing so, to avoid misunderstandings. You cannot charge students to clean their rooms.

Whilst we encourage students to be engaged in minor assistance in your household as a matter of courtesy (e.g. taking their dishes into the kitchen after meals), they are not expected to assist in maintaining other areas of your premises that they have not used and/or have not caused unreasonable uncleanliness.

Please also note students must not place wet clothes in their room, and/or to use excessive amount of power outlet extensions, for fire safety reasons.

23. How long can students use the shower for each day?

A: We recommend a ‘common-sense’ approach to the

issue, and try not to prescribe a ‘time limit’. Since homestay is about treating the student as part of your family, whatever standard your family adopts should apply, and should be in your ‘house rules’.

24. Do I have to wash the student’s clothes?

A: No – students are expected to do their own washing; however you should provide them with washing detergent, and allow access to the washing machine at least once a week. If you choose to wash students’ clothes, this should only be on a voluntary basis, and you may wish to avoid handling students’ undergarment for hygiene and cultural reasons.

Finances

25. I would like to receive payment directly from the students – can I do that?

A: As part of your agreement with us, you should not receive direct payments from students for providing homestay services (unless otherwise agreed with us; in such cases, we may charge a regular service fee, which will also be agreed with you in advance). This is for your protection, as otherwise we may not be able to help you if there is any financial dispute. We will only pay for homestay that’s been arranged by us.

26. What happens if a student wants to know my financial arrangements with you?

A: Again for your benefit, please refrain from discussing financial arrangements with students. If they have any such queries, please direct them to either their college’s relevant personnel or to us.

27. Do I have to share my internet connection with the student?

A: No; however if you wish to do so, internet is not covered in our payment to you. You may negotiate payment from the student for internet use. Our current recommendation is \$10-15 per week.

If you choose to share your internet connection with your student, we strongly suggest you clearly state in your house rules your expectations, such as restrictions on data usage (e.g. no streaming), downloading of explicit/ illegal/ copyrighted material, etc.

28. How much notice must a student give if he/she wishes to leave my home?

A: At least two weeks' written notice, which must be made to either his/her college, us, or to you. This may be waived in exceptional circumstances. This notice period is shortened to 1 week if student chooses to leave after his/her first four weeks of accommodation with you.

If a student leaves your homestay/stays away from homestay for extended periods and you did not receive a prior notification from us, please inform us immediately, especially if student is under 18.

29. How much notice must I give if I want my student to leave my home?

A: At least two weeks' written notice, unless in exceptional circumstances. We must also be notified.

30. Can you guarantee how long a student may stay at my home?

A: We cannot guarantee the length of a student's stay beyond what is stated in our agreement to you, which is usually four weeks. We also cannot guarantee student placements at your home, which is subject to student enrolments, availability, and suitability.

31. What is your cancellation policy?

A: Occasionally a student may cancel his/her homestay booking due to unforeseen circumstances. We will let you know as soon as practicable if this occurs, and endeavour to find another student to place with you. We do not pay

cancellation fee if:

- A student's course is cancelled; or
- If the booking is cancelled two or more days prior to his/her arrival; or
- Delay is minor and caused by unforeseen factors (e.g. flight); or
- If a replacement student can be placed to you on the day of the cancelled student's arrival. (This also applies if a student leaves your homestay without providing due notice, but a new student can be provided within the first student's applicable notice period.)

32. Will you disclose our personal or financial records to anyone?

A: No – we take our Homestay families' privacy very seriously. We will never disclose your personal details to anyone except to educational institutions, student agents or caregivers in the course of our homestay operation. We may also provide certain details (including financial) to law enforcement bodies if legally obliged to do so.

Insurance

33. Do I need to take out insurance in my role as Homestay host?

A: You must obtain appropriate levels of insurance covering people and properties under your care. This includes public liability insurance of no less than ten million dollars (\$10,000,000). Please note that as Homestay students involve financial arrangements, your existing home/contents insurance MAY not cover losses resulting from such arrangements.

We strongly recommend you obtain insurance appropriate for Homestay hosts (such as [Homestay Host Insurance Plus Cover](#)¹). Alternatively, you must show written advice from a qualified insurance professional stating that you are covered.

¹ <http://www.homestayhostinsuranceplus.com/>

(Please note this information relating to insurance is general in nature, please consult relevant professionals for your circumstances. Any references to insurance professionals are not endorsements or requirements, only suggestions.)

34. What if the student damaged my property?

A: You must report any alleged damages to us. We will liaise with the student and you to arrive at a satisfactory solution. Please refrain from directly demanding compensation from your student, as miscommunication may occur. Please also refer to Paragraph 33 regarding your need to obtain appropriate insurance.

Please note: In no event shall WINCS be liable for any damages arising out of any act or omission of the student placed in your home.

Dispute resolution

35. What happens if I have a dispute with the student?

A: Vast majority of students value their experience at homestay, and disputes are very rare. However people of different cultural backgrounds living together may have the rare conflict. We do not prescribe set rules on how conflicts must be resolved (except for those under 'critical incidents' in Paragraph 12), but suggest the following tiered approach:

- Step 0 – establish clear house rules, encourage open communication, so that expectations are mutually understood and respected.
- Step 1 – private discussion with the student – a 'quiet word', preferably involving another adult household member, may address most minor issues and misunderstandings. If this does not address the issue...
- Step 2 – contact us and the student's caregiver (if applicable) – we will liaise with each other and the college in resolving the issue.

36. Can I choose how damages are compensated?

A: When we negotiate and substantiate alleged damages by students, you must act in good faith and do your best to minimise further damage. Examples are:

- If the cost of claiming insurance (e.g. excess) is lower than the actual repair/replacement cost, you must claim insurance. Student may be liable to pay you the excess. If this is not followed, student may only be liable to pay you whatever the excess would have been had insurance been claimed.
- If the alleged damage has potential to cause further damage, you must act reasonably to prevent such further damage. E.g. if carpet became damp you must take steps to dry it, to prevent moulding which is more serious.