



Australian Homestay
Network

<p>THE STORY</p> <p>AUSTRALIA'S REPUTATION AND ECONOMY AT RISK</p>	<p>The International Student Support Network (ISSN) has successfully made its first homestay placement in Sydney.</p> <p>In a display of true Aussie spirit, almost 1000 local families have offered to open their homes to vulnerable students and show that as a country – we do care.</p> <p>International education is Australia's fourth-largest export, attracting 758,154 students to the country in 2019. The sector contributed \$37.6 billion to the Australian economy in the 2018–19 financial year, generating around 250,000 full-time equivalent jobs and supporting Australian livelihoods.</p> <p>The industry and the students who have chosen to study in Australia have been heavily impacted by the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19.</p> <p>As of 29 March 2020, there were 568,605 student visa holders in Australia. For many students – going home is not an option. With job losses, lack of financial support and anxiety about living day-to-day with the uncertainty of their future here in Australia, it is estimated some 100,000 international students are at risk of becoming “destitute” if more isn't done to assist them.</p> <p>In the words of Australian Greens Education spokesperson Senator Mehreen Faruqi: <i>“These are students who we welcomed into our country, many of whom are now facing nothing less than poverty, starvation and homelessness.</i></p> <p>Education providers and state governments have taken on the responsibility of establishing hardship funds and support services to help students. Temporary visa holders, including international students, were <u>excluded</u> from federal government welfare programs, although they have been permitted to extend their work hours to 40 hours per week and access to superannuation if they have been in Australia for 12 months+.</p> <p>Australia is the third most popular destination for international students behind the United States and the United Kingdom. These top three countries have been increasingly challenged by other players in recent years.</p> <p>Our future reputation and our economy are dependent on how we manage this crisis and care for the international students currently in our country.</p> <p>Chief Executive of Universities Australia, Catriona Jackson, summed up the situation as such: <i>“Supporting international students in tough times is not only about helping those in need, it is a longer-term investment in our economy. It sends a clear message overseas to potential students thinking about their post COVID-19 future that Australia remains a smart choice for a world-class education.”</i></p>
<p>THE STUDENT Oshan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Oshan is a 22-year-old international student from Bangladesh who says that <i>‘cricket is his second life’</i>.• He is one of the first students placed in the ISSN program after reaching out to AHN for help. Oshan was desperately trying to find somewhere to live as he was running out of money and the situation was impacting his mental health.• He used all of his savings and most of the superannuation he was able to access to pay for rent and food and was living alone in a place in Western Sydney. SCU provided him with \$500 which he used towards his university fees.• Early signs are showing that Oshan's placement will be a success.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He is already enjoying the cultural exchange made possible through homestay, making a dessert commonly eaten at the end of Ramadan to share with his host family.• Even though he is afraid of dogs, he is getting along with his hosts' resident Maltese.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oshan has been in Australia for 3½ years and first came to study at La Trobe University's Sydney Campus. He is in the final year of his Bachelor of IT at Southern Cross University (SCU), Sydney and is currently studying online 2 days a week. • Oshan's family consists of his father, mother and one sister. His sister has just finished her degree and studied at a university in Bangladesh. • It was his father's dream for Oshan to study in Australia. He had always wanted to study here, so he did everything possible to make sure his son had the opportunity to do so. This was important as he would be the first member of their family to go abroad for higher education. Oshan had to work/study very hard to pass all the requirements to be able to come and complete his studies in Australia. <i>Oshan says his family 'were flying in the sky' when he was accepted to come to Australia.</i> • His father used to work in a textile factory but due to the pandemic, he has been put off as most factories are not operational at this time. His mother is a college teacher and she has been able to continue working during the current situation. The situation back home is bad and it is getting worse. Bangladesh is not a very developed country and where people continue to work, social distancing is not as effective as it should be. • Oshan's experience of Australia before COVID-19 had been really positive. He loves everything about Australia. His uni has been flexible and the people have been very welcoming and very warm – when you are away from your own home it's always important to feel welcomed and this has always been the case since he arrived here in Australia. • Oshan was working at a lolly shop in the city but was let go around 2 months ago when the COVID-19 outbreak caused businesses to cut their trading hours and reduce staff. He did get another job at Woolworths in Campbelltown but hasn't had regular shifts he can rely on. • Oshan knows many international students who are in a similar situation to his. Some are still working but have had their hours reduced, while others have no work and are finding it hard to live – everything's day-to-day and without any savings, they are trying to survive as best they can.
<p>THE HOST Leigh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leigh teaches international students and lives in a charming Sydney townhouse in the city's inner suburbs with her young son and their Maltese dog, Bindi. • She joined AHN in 2019 and has hosted 4 students, with the longest staying for around 4 months. • Her last student was from Vietnam and had to go home due to the COVID-19 outbreak. • Leigh accepted Oshan's placement after being approached by AHN. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although it's only been a few days since Oshan arrived, Leigh says he is lovely and thinks they will connect more once everyone in the house can get into their normal routine. • As someone who teaches international students, Leigh said she was "<i>very, very worried</i>" about how they would survive through the COVID-19 crisis knowing that many of them rely on part-time jobs and are so far away from home. • Leigh was an exchange student herself. She lived in Italy when she was 16 and had a lovely homestay family and now likes to welcome international students into her home. • Leigh thinks homestay is a great experience for Australians kids like her son so they can meet people from other countries and appreciate where we are in the world. It's also exciting being able to show people around and help them experience Australia, especially when they're newly arrived. • She had no worries about hosting international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Leigh is very aware most of them have been here for a number of months and in fact, her students were warning her about the virus before it was even being reported in Australia and taking it really seriously before we were. • Leigh would definitely recommend homestay hosting. All the students she's had in her home are "<i>focused on their study, very mature, very respectful</i>".
<p>THE ORGANISATION</p>	<p>The International Student Support Network (ISSN) is an initiative of the Australian Homestay Network (AHN), delivering low cost short-term lodging to eligible international students identified as needing support and assistance with accommodation and living in Australia due to the COVID-19 economic crisis.</p> <p>AHN is Australia's leading standards-based homestay provider for international students and has placed 60,000 students from 180 countries in homestays across Australia over the last 12 years. AHN hosts have an intrinsic community spirit, a quality which came to the fore as AHN rose to</p>

	<p>the challenge of housing more than 600 asylum seekers released from detention in Australian homes in 2012/13.</p> <p>AHN manages the process of finding a suitable host family/host for international students applying for the ISSN. AHN also ensures the host has proper clearances, is suitable and most importantly organises both host and student insurances for the placement.</p> <p>The ISSN program could not happen without the generosity of Australians willing to take students in. An ISSN homestay costs \$160 per week and includes full 24/7 support from AHN, insurance (for host and student), accommodation, Wi-Fi and meals. In most cases this is at least partially paid for from a government or university hardship fund. The host receives \$120 per week and is considered a semi volunteer, providing the student with a home, emotional support, mentorship, meals, private bedroom, bathroom and a local support network.</p>
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Further details regarding the first ISSN placement are below.
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[ISSN Media Coverage](#)