



AHN

**Australian Homestay
Network**

Homestay Program for Under 18 Students

Welcome to Australia



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Let the Adventure Begin

Hi and welcome to Australia.

You are about to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience – studying in an Australian high school, learning about Australian culture and living with a new family.

Leaving home and studying in a new country involves a lot of changes and challenges. But we want you to know we are here to help you make the most of your time in Australia, meet new people and create memories that will stay with you forever. You just need to make a commitment to follow the rules and fully participate in the program.

This handbook has been designed to guide you on this journey and give you an idea of what to expect while living in Australia as an international student. Please read through each section so you have a full understanding of what AHN homestay offers, our policies and the expectations you need to follow while staying with your host family and attending school.

There are so many amazing experiences in store for you. We encourage you to enjoy all the opportunities that come your way and get involved in as many family, school and community activities you can. Remember – we want you to succeed and our team is here to make sure you have a great year. Please get in touch if you need us.

All the best!



The BEST Homestay Program in Australia

AHN offers a premium homestay program for international students.

Our homestays are designed for students who want to experience Australian culture firsthand, with the added support and feeling of home.

We understand younger students require more attention and support, so we take extra care when selecting hosts and assign a local homestay manager to check in with you regularly.



You are in good hands with AHN

AHN has received acknowledgement and commendation for 'appropriate' standards from industry bodies – including the Council of International Students of Australia (CISA) – and in two Australian Government inquiries



The quality of our standards, services and support have also been independently endorsed by the [National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme \(NEAS\)](#).

AHN is proud to be the first homestay service provider to be recognised under this new industry-recognised framework.

Find your home away from home

Our team of homestay experts will match you with the host family that's right for you
You'll be treated like a member of the family
Meals are provided and shared
Take part in family activities

It is a unique cultural exchange

Improve your English and learn local slang through everyday conversation
Experience life in an Australian family
Share your culture with your host family and other locals
Learn about Australian customs and take part in celebrations

Why choose AHN for homestay

World-class service

Comprehensive pre-departure orientation
24/7 emergency line
Your homestay will include a private bedroom with study space, internet access and be close to public transport

You'll be safe, happy and well cared for

AHN homestay hosts are carefully selected, interviewed and trained to ensure guests are placed in safe and welcoming homes
Your host will act as your custodian, monitor your school attendance and provide guidance on appropriate behaviour

Settle in to life in Australia

Stay in a reliable and supportive home close to your school
Your hosts will help you set up a bank account and purchase a cell phone/SIM card
Find out where to shop
Get the best information about local recreation and entertainment venues

The Homestay Experience

What is included?

- ✚ Homestay with an AHN-approved host family.
- ✚ Your homestay will be no more than 60 minutes from your school.
- ✚ You will have a private bedroom with your own bed (this may be a single bed) and basic furniture including a desk and chair to study, a lamp and space to hang/store your clothing. Feel free to bring some personal items to make your room more comfortable such as photos or a stuffed toy.
- ✚ Three meals a day, seven days a week.
- ✚ Internet and access to shared household facilities (bathroom, laundry, kitchen, etc.).
- ✚ Your hosts will explain how the public transport system works so you can get to/from school and be comfortable travelling around the city.
- ✚ Insurance that provides coverage for damages, injury and your belongings whilst in the homestay.

Your Host Family

AHN hosts are carefully selected to ensure students like you are placed in environments that are not only safe and comfortable, but also warm and welcoming. Hosts who register to care for under 18 students must commit to extra responsibilities so we know they are focussed on your wellbeing. They go through a certification process including comprehensive training, an in-home interview and a house inspection. Working with Children Checks and/or Police Checks for household residents are also required as per State/Territory requirements.

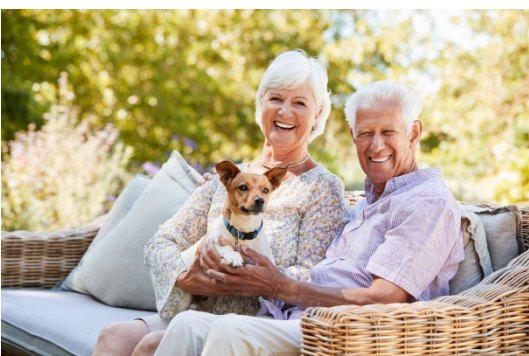
What are Australian families like?

Many different kinds of people are homestay hosts. A homestay family could be made up of:

- Mother, father and children
- A single man or woman
- Retired individuals
- A young couple
- Grandparents
- A single mother or father and their children

We have people from all over the world hosting with us. They come from a variety of backgrounds and have their own hobbies and interests. Some have pets, some do not. Some live in houses with a backyard, while other live in a townhouse or apartment.

Part of our unique placement process is finding you a host family that matches your preferences in a manner that encourages and supports diversity. We do not discriminate based on religious affiliation, ethnicity or sexual orientation.



Hosts who provide homestay for younger guests like you will:

- ✚ Undertake post-arrival orientation with you.
- ✚ Take the time to ensure you become familiar with their neighbourhood and understand local customs.
- ✚ Care for you outside of school hours.
- ✚ Help maintain your safety and wellbeing by monitoring your school attendance, social activities and behaviour.
- ✚ Keep AHN, your school and your parents/guardian informed if you have any issues or concerns.



Living in Australia

Moving to another country can feel strange at first. The day-to-day activities you are used to may be very different and you might be unsure what to say, how to act and what to do in certain situations. Watch our Student Orientation video or read on for tips on how to be SAFE, HEALTHY and HAPPY to enjoy your experience in Australia and be successful in your studies.



AHN Student Orientation video – English
<https://homestaynetwork.wistia.com/medias/ysbqcg3tdl>

Meals

- ✚ Breakfast will often be self-serve (you make the meal with food provided).
- ✚ Your host will provide you with a packed lunch.
- ✚ It is common for families to eat together at dinner.
- ✚ Keep an open mind about Australian food and try the meals your host family provides, even if they are unfamiliar to you.
- ✚ Tell your homestay host if you have any allergies or dietary requirements.
- ✚ Let them know about foods you like or would like to try.
- ✚ If your hosts offer you more food and you say no, they may not offer a second time. If you are hungry, you should accept the first offer or ask, “May I please have some more _____?”
- ✚ Only help yourself to food if your homestay host says it is OK to do so.

Eating tips

- ✚ Chew with your mouth closed
- ✚ Do not talk with food in your mouth
- ✚ Eat quietly without slurping
- ✚ Ask for items to be passed to you e.g. “Please pass the salad”
- ✚ It is not polite to burp or clear your throat at the table
- ✚ Offer to help clean up after meals.

Examples of food your host might provide

Breakfast

Cereal, toast, fruit, yoghurt, juice, tea, coffee.

Lunch

Sandwiches, leftovers from dinner, fruit, salad.

Dinner

Pasta, meat and vegetables, stir fry, chicken skewers, rice.



Personal Safety

Having fun in Australia is an important part of the student experience but you need to be prepared to stay safe.

- ✚ Call 000 for police, fire and ambulance in Australia.
- ✚ Try to go out with two or more people and be cautious if you are alone.
- ✚ Stay in well-lit areas if you are alone at night.
- ✚ Always seek permission from your host family if you plan on going out and let them know what time you are going to be home.
- ✚ Keep your cell phone on you at all times and do not leave it unattended.
- ✚ Wait for the bus or train in a well-lit area.
- ✚ Stay on the sidewalk if you are walking.
- ✚ If you are ever in a situation with friends or an adult that makes you feel uncomfortable for any reason, leave immediately and/or call your homestay host, your AHN Coordinator, or a trusted adult right away.

Beach Safety

- ✚ Always swim near a lifeguard and swim with a buddy.
- ✚ Swim when it is daylight.
- ✚ Only swim at patrolled beaches.
- ✚ Wear sunscreen and a hat.
- ✚ Obey posted signs and flags.
- ✚ Learn rip current safety.
- ✚ Wear a life jacket if you are not very good at swimming.

Wildlife

- ✚ If you see a snake, leave it alone. It will not hurt you unless it becomes frightened.
- ✚ Some spiders can bite – don't touch them.
- ✚ Mosquito and sand fly bites can be avoided by using insect repellent. Use it every day in summer.
- ✚ Use caution with all animals and insects you see. Don't disturb them and they won't disturb you.

Staying Healthy

- ✚ You must have medical insurance that covers you for the duration of your stay. Make sure your vaccinations are up to date before travelling to Australia.
- ✚ Your parents will need to confirm you are fit to travel. AHN and your host family will not be responsible for any incidences involving a pre-existing medical condition.
- ✚ Students in the AHN High School Program may not use, consume, purchase, distribute, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol, drugs, tobacco or e-cigarettes.
- ✚ Go to a pharmacy if you require any medication.
- ✚ If you take prescription drugs or medications, you must bring a copy of the written prescription signed by a licensed medical doctor with you and present the prescription to your host family or AHN Coordinator upon request.

Culture Shock

Adjusting to life in a new country can be overwhelming. Some students may experience 'culture shock' when faced with learning a new language, eating different foods and living in an unfamiliar environment.

Symptoms of culture shock can include:

- ✚ Headaches
- ✚ Nausea
- ✚ Depression
- ✚ Sleeping Problems
- ✚ Panic attacks
- ✚ Withdrawal
- ✚ Extreme homesickness



How to deal with culture shock:

1. Learn about the city you are travelling to so you know what to expect before you arrive.
2. Contact your family and friends regularly.
3. Develop a routine so daily tasks are easy to manage.
4. Spend time with your host family. Get involved in family activities, eat meals with them and talk with your hosts.
5. Find people to socialise with, take part in student events and talk to other students about how you feel.
6. Start a new hobby or pastime.
7. Speak English as much as possible. Communicating with people in the local language will help you understand the culture and make friends.
8. Stay positive and be open-minded about the experience.
9. Speak to your host family or AHN if you are feeling vulnerable or not settling in.

Bullying

What is Bullying?

- ✚ Bullying is repeated anti-social behaviour that has negative affect on a person's wellbeing.
- ✚ Bullying can be physical, verbal and/or emotional.
- ✚ Bullying can be inflicted by an individual or a group of people.
- ✚ Bullying may occur at school/university, at home, at work, on public transport or online.

Examples of Bullying

- ✚ Harassing someone based on their gender, race, culture, religion, accent, sexuality or disability.
- ✚ Repeatedly hurting someone physically e.g. hitting, slapping, pushing or restraining them.
- ✚ Sending abusive, threatening, explicit or upsetting messages to someone via text or on social media.
- ✚ Writing nasty comments about someone online.
- ✚ Sharing embarrassing videos or photos of someone online or via text message without their consent.
- ✚ Spreading rumours about a person, calling them names or making rude gestures.
- ✚ Stalking.

You may feel...

- ✚ guilty, like it is your fault
- ✚ ashamed and embarrassed
- ✚ alone, like there's no-one to help you
- ✚ scared to talk about it

- 🚩 like you don't fit in socially
- 🚩 unsafe and afraid to attend school or work
- 🚩 physically sick

What you can do

1. Ask for help. Talk to your homestay host, your parents, a teacher or friend. You can also contact AHN 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1300 MYSTAY (1300 697829).
2. Speak to the bully. Try not be aggressive, but confidently ask the person/s to stop saying or doing what it is that's hurting you.
3. Focus on your wellbeing. Stay healthy with exercise/sport, try mediating or listen to music.
4. Spend time doing things you enjoy. Hang out with your friends, go to the movies or take up a new hobby so you are not focusing on the bullying.
5. If you are being bullied online, try contacting the person to resolve the issue in a calm way first. If the bullying continues, take a screenshot of the messages or posts, block the person and report it.

You are not Alone

If you are having a challenging time, it's OK to seek help and support. Even if you feel like people aren't listening or won't take action – DON'T GIVE UP. Please call us on 1300 MYSTAY (1300 697829) any time if you need someone to talk to.

You can also reach out to the below organisations for assistance.

All Ages

– **Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636

– **Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14

Lifeline also offers a free interpreting service. To access this service:

- 1) Call TIS National on 131 450 and ask to talk to Lifeline on 13 11 14 in the language required.
- 2) TIS National will call 13 11 14 on your behalf.

25 and Under

– **Kids Helpline** 1800 551 800

– **Headspace** 1800 650 890

Travel Tips

At the airport

We offer Airport Pickup as part of our program (for a fee) so you can go directly to your homestay when you arrive in Australia. Your school may advise that it is compulsory for you to pre-book this service with us.

Public transport

Public transport in Australia includes trains, buses, trams, light rail and ferries. You may use public transportation with prior permission from your host family. They must show you where the service stops and help you understand the timetable.

Tips for travelling on public transport

1. Always have a valid ticket.
2. Behave appropriately: be polite to other passengers, don't litter and keep your feet off the seats.
3. Keep your noise level low (talking/music/phone).
4. Transport is usually less frequent on weekends and public holidays.

As a Pedestrian

- ✚ Always cross at pedestrian crossings or traffic lights where possible.
- ✚ Always look before crossing the road.
- ✚ Stay on the footpath, do not walk on the road.
- ✚ Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle and a seat belt when you are travelling in a car.

Student Guide to the House Rules



STUDENT GUIDE TO THE HOUSE RULES

Including Under 18 and Study Tour Guidelines

Welcome to Australia! We hope you enjoy your stay. Below are guidelines, which will help to create a happy home for everyone.

Telephone numbers

AHN 24 hour = 1300 MYSTAY - 1300 697829

Police/Fire/Ambulance Emergency: 000

Host Name: _____
Address: _____

Home Phone: _____
Mobile: _____
Email: _____

Contacting you in Australia:

- Between you and your family: Please use your mobile phone or purchase a pre-paid phone card.
- Between you and AHN/your host: You need to advise your email address as soon as you arrive and your mobile as soon you have set it up.

Payments for your stay:

- Homestay invoices are sent to you via email and can be viewed in the AHN system.
 - If you have forgotten your login details, please reset your password via this link: https://au.homestaynetwork.org/users/forgot_password
- Payment Reference - Please use your GUEST ID as your payment reference so that AHN can match your payment to your invoice

Health Issues

- Tell your host if you are feeling unwell. They'll advise you where the nearest medical centre is.
- You may have to pay to see the doctor, however your OSHC may cover some medical costs. Dental and optical are not covered under your health insurance. You will receive your health care card on orientation day at your school.
- **13SICK** is the number for medical assistance after 6:00pm at night and before 6:00am in the morning.
- Follow any public health directions in your local area, and check to see if there are any public health orders in place when travelling away from your homestay.
- If you are having a challenging time, it's OK to seek help and support. You can reach out to the below organisations for assistance.

All Ages

- **Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636
- **Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14

Lifeline also offers a free interpreting service. To access this service:

- 1) Call TIS National on 131 450 and ask to talk to Lifeline on 13 11 14 in the language required.
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25 and Under

- **Headspace** 1800 650 890
- **Kids Helpline** 1800 55 1800

<p>Privacy</p> <p>When you are sharing a home, it is important to respect each other's private time and space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When in your room, toilet and bathroom remember to keep the door closed and if there is a lock please use it. • Knock before you enter a room, especially any private use areas (bedrooms and bathrooms).
<p>Shoes inside the house</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your host if shoes can be worn in the house. • Please do not wear high-heel shoes on polished floorboards. • Try to avoid wearing shoes on the carpet.
<p>House Key</p> <p>Your host will provide you with your own house key when you arrive. If you lose the key you may be charged for the cost of a replacement key. The key is to be returned to your host before you move out. When leaving the house daily, please ensure that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off lights, fans, air conditioning, heating, laptops, etc. at the wall or power board switch in your room • Lock the outside door and close any windows. • Other: _____ • Other: _____
<p>Your Room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Australia, we sleep in a bed, <u>between the sheets</u>, with blankets on top. • Ask your host about changing bed sheets, pillow cases and towels. This will be done at least once every two weeks. <p>We ask you to please;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your room clean and tidy. • Do not cook, or keep food in your room. • Do not leave any wet clothing or towels in your room. • Do not stick anything to the walls. If you wish to hang anything, see your host. • Ask your homestay family if you need extra blankets if you are cold or a fan if you are hot.
<p>Noise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your host won't mind you playing music or chatting with your friends via mobile or internet but please try to do this before 10:30pm at night. • If you need to call your family after this time due to time zone differences, please check if this is ok with your host first. • Always try to keep the noise level at a point where it doesn't upset other family members or their sleep.
<p>Internet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your host how the internet works in their home. • Ask your host how this works in their home. The internet is for study purposes. Please be mindful of internet usage when it comes to gaming and entertainment.

<p>Toilet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never squat or stand on the toilet seat. • Never flush anything down the toilet except for toilet paper. • Don't use too much toilet paper as it may block or cause the toilet to overflow. • Always wash your hands with soap after using the toilet. • Please wipe down any spills on the toilet after you've finished. <p>Women/Girls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sanitary items such as tampons and pads should never be flushed down the toilet. • At home, there will be a bin in the toilet or bathroom area or you may need to ask your host mother where to dispose of sanitary items. • If you are still unsure, wrap the sanitary item in toilet paper and put in a plastic bag and then put it in the garbage bin outside.
<p>Meals</p> <p>Students have different meal options with their homestay. Your host or AHN can show you which meal option you have chosen (check your invoice or placement report). The information below should be used as a guide if your package includes meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast: Let your host know what you want and you can help yourself e.g. cereal, toast, fruit, juice, tea or coffee. Australians normally have a cold breakfast. • Lunch: This could include sandwiches, salads, fruit or muesli bars but may also be noodles or a hot meal. 'Leftovers' is food cooked the night before and put into containers in the fridge that you can then heat up again at your Education Provider. • Dinner: Can be hot or cold. Discuss with your host what food you don't like so this can be considered when they make their family meal. Dinner is normally served early in the evening in Australia. Ask your host what time they usually eat. It is polite to let your hosts know by 4:00pm if you will not be home for dinner or will be late so that food is not wasted. <p>When you use the kitchen please make sure that you leave the kitchen clean and tidy. Under 18's are not allowed to cook on their own and must ask permission before using the kitchen, this is not allowed in all homestays.</p>
<p>Water Usage – Water Restrictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Australia water is expensive and its use is restricted in some areas. • Please help us save water by keeping showers to a 5-10 minute limit and turning off the water whilst you brush your teeth. • Please do not waste water. Ask your host family about other ways to save water.
<p>Bathroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please only bathe in the bath or shower cubicle so water does not splash onto the bathroom floor. • When using the bathroom, close the door. There may be a privacy lock on the door, please use it. • There is usually a bath mat on the floor. Stand on that when you get out of the shower so you do not slip over. • Hang your towel up to dry after you use it. Check with your host family where you should hang your wet towel. • Have a toiletry bag with your own shampoo, soap, tissues, etc. • Leave any wet items in the bathroom or hang out to dry – please do not leave them in your room. • If you make a mess, please clean it up. • Please complete all shower activities by 10:00pm. If you need to shower later for some reason, please chat to your host.
<p>Personal Hygiene</p> <p>Remember that Australia can have very warm weather; students should maintain good personal hygiene by putting on deodorant each morning before dressing.</p>
<p>Lights, Fans and Heating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please make sure you turn off all lights when you go to sleep (ask your host for a small wall light if needed). • Please turn off fans/air conditioning and heating in your bedroom when you are not home.

<p>Laundry</p> <p>Ask your host family about washing your clothes. Your host family may want you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your own washing – your host will instruct you on how the machine operates and how much detergent to use. Full loads only please. Only perform 2 washes per week due to water restrictions. Once the washing is done, hang it on the clothesline. • Some host may ask you to put your laundry items in a basket provided and your host will wash them for you. • Ask your host if you would like to hang your underwear to dry in a private place. • Your host will advise you what day you need to change the sheets on your bed and when to change your towels.
<p>Cleaning</p> <p>Cleaning is part of family life and you may be asked to help out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with tidying up after meals, including washing or drying dishes. • Keep your own room clean and tidy and make your bed. • Keep your bathroom clean and tidy – do not leave wet towels and clothes on the floor. • If you make a mess anywhere in the home, please clean it up. If you are unsure what to use, chat to your host and they will help.
<p>Broken or damaged something in the house?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't worry, accidents can happen sometimes. • Please let your host know if something has been broken or damaged. • AHN students and hosts have some insurance coverage. Give AHN a call or email if you have any questions.
<p>Smoking and Alcohol (not permitted for students under the age of 18 years old)</p> <p>Do not smoke in the house –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are over 18 and your host allows smoking at the house, you can only smoke outside and use the container provided for the butts. • You cannot smoke inside the host's home. Please ask if you have any problems or questions. <p>Be sensible with alcohol –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are over 18 and your host allows alcohol at the house, be sure to drink responsibly and behave in a respectful manner. • Remember that excessive drinking can have a negative impact on your studies and your personal life.
<p>Friends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you wish to have friends visit you at your homestay, please ask your host for permission before you invite them over. • It may not be permitted to have friends visit or sleep overnight.
<p>Going Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are under 18, you must advise your host where you are going and when you will be home prior to going out at night. You need to be home by the curfew set by your welfare provider and/or host. • Students under 18 years of age are not permitted to stay away from the homestay overnight without written permission from their college guardian. • If you go out with friends at night or on weekends you must find your own way home either by public transport or taxi. Travel with friends especially at night!
<p>Public Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the local transport app on your phone and computer to work out the best and quickest route to travel. • Ask your host and college about a transport card as this is cheaper than buying a paper ticket when using public transport. You must carry your valid student ID card to receive a concession or you may be fined a fee by the Transport department inspector.

Follow AHN Policies

- All homestay participants – Guests and Hosts – must abide by AHN policies through a placement.
- Public policies can be found at <https://au.homestaynetwork.org/policies>.

Intending to leave Homestay?

You are required to give AHN and your Host family two weeks' notice in writing. Send AHN a message through the system or email your local office if you wish to give notice.

You are not permitted to enter into a private arrangement with your host.

AHN Policies

The Australian Homestay Network has developed policies to ensure everyone involved in our programs has a safe and rewarding experience. You can view our policies at <https://au.homestaynetwork.org/policies/>. As our policies are updated from time to time, we recommend you bookmark this URL so you have easy access to the most current information.

We are Always Here to Help

You can get in touch with your local AHN Coordinator by:

- 📞 Phone
- ✉️ Email
- ✉️ Sending us a message through your AHN Mailbox

You can also contact us if you:

- 📞 Want to ask questions about homestay
- 📞 Have any concerns about your homestay
- 📞 Want to move out of your homestay
- 📞 Are feeling unsettled or uncomfortable

Our normal office hours are 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. If you have an emergency outside of these hours please contact our 24/7 contact centre on 1300 MYSTAY (1300 697829).

