**Homestay Information for Hosts**

1. **What is Homestay?**

Simply put, Homestay is full board accommodation offered by a family, couple or single person for which a set weekly fee is charged. This fee covers all expenses associated with providing food and shelter to an International Student. Please note there should be no more than three International Students in the homestay, this includes students from other schools or colleges.

1. **What kind of family do Homestay students need?**

They need a family who can **provide them with a home environment which is caring, friendly, understanding, adaptable and supportive**.

It needs to be remembered that we are dealing with teenagers who are in a strange new country living away from family and friends. The customs are different, food is different, traffic is different, even the water is different. Everything is different for them. Feeling homesick, lonely, and perhaps unwell, including the stress of performing academically, are just some of the issues facing these young people.

Homestay hosts will be given a briefing to

* Understand the needs of adolescence
* Cultural, linguist and religion’s differences
* Needs of students living away from home
* The need for flexibility regards discipline rules and co-operative living and what to do if a problem occurs

This can be an especially stressful time for a young person especially during the initial settling in period. These students need care and support in a physical, social and psychological sense. **They need the Homestay host’s genuine commitment to be supportive.**

**Having said this, Homestay hosts are not responsible for the student’s overall welfare. Any significant welfare or school related issues concerning the student should immediately be raised with our International student Coordinator, Sally HUANG, mobile number 0400 560 429.**

**A Child Safety Standards and your obligations as a homestay provider**

The Department of Education policy requires that you understand and agree to meet the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) Child Safety Standards.

The key points relate to the definition of what constitutes abuse and your response if you form a belief that a child is being subjected to abuse.

Child abuse includes:

* sexual or grooming offences;
* physical violence;
* serious emotional; or
* psychological harm; and
* serious neglect.

If you form a belief that your homestay student is being subjected to any forms of the abuse listed, you must follow the advice contained in the attached document:

*Four Critical Actions – Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse.*

Further information regarding the College commitment and policy regarding child safety can be found on our College website. If you cannot access the website we are happy to provide you with a hard copy on request.

The policy can be found on the website under the heading:

*“Our School”;* then

*“Policies”;* then see

*“Doncaster Secondary College Student Engagement, Safety and Well-Being Policy”* pages 13 and 16; and the information contained in Appendix 6.

The College relies heavily on the support and advice of the Homestay host regarding the student under their care. It is a partnership between school and Homestay provider, but the school assumes ultimate responsibility. The school will support Homestay hosts in their role by providing information and being available to offer advice. Homestay hosts will be briefed by the International Coordinator prior to the arrival of the student.

1. **What are the day to day requirements regarding accommodation and meals?**
* The student will need their own bedroom, wardrobe, desk, study light, towels and linen.
* Internet access must be provided and is included in the Homestay fee.
* Three substantial meals a day with access to reasonable snacks.
* The payment covers the accommodation, meals and utilities excluding phone but inclusive of internet access.
* Use of the general living areas.
* The Homestay hosts must reside at the same address.
* The Homestay family must inform the College at least three weeks in advance if all adults will be away from the house for any extended period unless they are including the host student in their holiday travel.
* The student must have access to laundry facilities.
* It is expected that the student will help with household chores, such as keeping their own bedroom tidy and helping in the kitchen.
* The student will pay for products for personal use, such as shampoo, razors etc.
* Noise levels [stereo, TV, etc.] are kept to a minimum and at appropriate times.
* If a student leaves the Homestay and forgets any of their possessions the Homestay must contact the College. If the property of the student is disposed of, the Homestay will be fully liable for all costs associated with replacement.
* The College will monitor the Homestay accommodation and will visit at least twice a year.
* A maximum of three Homestay students, including those from another college.
* The $310 per week payment covers all costs as outlined above. See below regarding holding fees during vacations. The Homestay’s parent will make arrangements for the payment of the Homestay fee to you. The College retains a bond $600 to cover possible damage or non-payment of rent.
1. **Following are a range of issues that may arise from time to time:**

**The key is to remember there needs to be a flexible and reasonable approach to matters of discipline, house rules and cooperative living.**

**Visitors or overnight stay at a friend’s**

Students must seek permission from their host family before inviting friends to visit them. Some Homestay families may agree to provide meals for friends when given appropriate notice. Students must have permission to stay overnight away from their designated Homestay and must provide their Homestay family with the name and contact phone number of the person with whom they are staying. The college must be informed using the appropriate form.

**School Holidays**

Students need to inform the College and host family in advance about whether they are returning home for school holidays or if they intend travelling within Victoria or interstate. International Students aged from 15 to 18 are required to provide written approval from their family advising of the travel plan. There are a number of requirements regarding such travel arrangements. Please contact the International Coordinator for further information. All students are required to return to Melbourne prior to school commencement, unless exceptional reasons arise. In this case, a formal written request from the parent is required. Regarding Homestay payments whilst students are away during term vacations and Christmas vacation, Homestay hosts will receive $105 per week during the short term vacations or $15 per day and $70 per week for the end of year vacation period or $10 per day.

**Concerns about your Homestay student**

If you are unhappy or have concerns, it is important that you speak to the International Student Coordinator immediately. The Coordinator will do her best to help you. It is vital that the International Coordinator is informed of any disagreements or disputes that may occur between you and your student. The College has a set policy and procedure for handling complaints pertaining to International Students. See also child safety requirements contained in this document.

**Giving Notice to move Homestay**

If students are not happy with the Homestay accommodation that has been arranged, they can request a change in accommodation provided they have a legitimate reason. However, they must seek the approval of the International Student Coordinator and once the request is approved, the College will give the host family at least two weeks’ notice of a change of Homestay accommodation. If the Homestay student needs to be moved because there is an issue of health or safety, they will be removed immediately and all monies paid in advance need to be returned to the College. Under these circumstances there is no requirement for two weeks’ notice. Alternatively, the Homestay host may wish to terminate the Homestay agreement. The Homestay would normally give the College at least four weeks’ notice prior to proceeding with the termination process. The exception would be in a situation where the Homestay student is causing a risk to the health and welfare of you or your family. In this situation we would endeavour to move the student as soon as is practically possible.

Homestay families should also be aware of the following:

* Some International Students will not be used to doing household chores as they may have had servants in their home.
* Homestay hosts should be aware that students may not be used to eating a Western diet and that they will need a snack when they come home from school.
* Privacy is important and personal possessions and personal space of students should be respected. Please kindly inform student in advance if you ought to enter his/her room when the student is absent.

**Specific suggestions regarding rules or expectations of the students under Homestay care?**

The following is a list of suggestions which would especially apply to younger students. As noted above, it needs to some degree of flexibility especially when dealing with older students.

1. Students are not permitted to smoke inside the Homestay accommodation.

 B. Students are not permitted to drink alcohol or take non-prescription drugs.

1. Driving can be dangerous, so the College does not recommend secondary school students to drive a car to or from school or travel with other students in cars to and from school.

D. Recommendations regarding going out after school and on weekends:

**Monday – Thursday**:

Limited outings are recommended unless it’s a College event or an activity with Homestay;

**Friday**:

Outings should be discussed with Homestay family prior. You must return home by an agreed time, in general, around 10pm;

**Saturday**:

Students may go out, provided details are given to the Homestay family, including who they will be with and where they are going. In general, students should return home no later than 10pm; and

**Sunday**:

Socialising or outings should be supported as long as all homework is completed.

1. Telephone:

Most students will have their own mobile phone. Do not **under any circumstances** sign a mobile phone contract on their behalf. Students will normally have a prepaid phone which does not require a contract.

1. Overnight stays:

Students should not stay overnight at other accommodations unless the Homestay family has spoken with the other family and / or the College agrees. The college must be informed in writing prior to the student staying overnight at another location.

1. Attendance at school:

School rules apply. Punctuality is expected and notes from Homestay families are necessary when a student is absent.

1. Entering into contracts:

Do not under any circumstance enter into any type of contract on behalf of the student. The College will not honour any such arrangement and will not cover any loss you incur.

|  |
| --- |
| **Cost and Payment Arrangements** |

The price of homestay accommodation is an amount agreed to by the student’s parents and the homestay provider prior to the commencement of the accommodation arrangement.

Payment of homestay rent has to be made by the date specified in the Homestay Responsibility Agreement, which is signed by all parties on the student’s arrival. The initial payment includes two weeks’ rent in advance plus a bond that is the equivalent of two weeks’ rent. The bond is refundable at the conclusion of the homestay period after all expenses, repairs or damage (if any) have been paid. Students and/or their parents are required to reimburse homestay providers for any damage to property (if any) during the student’s time of residence.

The School will collect and manage the homestay bonds and will implement an appropriate homestay payment arrangement.

**Payment options are as follows:**

1. The student’s family can pay the entire homestay costs, at the agreed homestay rate, to the school. The school holds this money in trust and pays the agreed homestay rate to the homestay provider fortnightly or monthly.
2. The school can assist the student's parents and the homestay provider to establish a payment method through which the parents pay money directly to the homestay provider each fortnight or month.

While there may be circumstances where over 18 year old students are involved in the arrangements for paying for their accommodation, it is important that younger students are not involved in the payment process.

**Note:** Every effort should be made to ensure that homestay accommodation payment methods avoid the student being involved in the transaction.

In particular, homestay providers with concerns about payments must not involve the student directly in any discussion or dispute—any matters concerning homestay payments should be resolved between the International Student Coordinator, the student's parents and the homestay provider.

|  |
| --- |
| **Homestay Responsibility Agreement** |

Payment of homestay has to be made by the date specified in the Homestay Responsibility Agreement, which should be signed by the homestay host, the school and the student after discussion shortly after arrival, and by the parents where the student is under 18 years of age. Students under 18 years of age are signing the homestay agreement to acknowledge their being made aware of its content.

The Homestay Responsibility Agreement set out:

1. The weekly/fortnightly cost of homestay, bond amount, payment arrangements and holiday/return arrangements
2. The obligations and expectations of the homestay provider and the student, including the need for ensuring that the homestay family has in place appropriate insurance coverage (home and content insurance) which recognises that the international student is residing within the homestay premises (covering but not limited to house and contents, personal belongings, damage to property and legal liability coverage).

|  |
| --- |
| **On Arrival** |

Upon the student’s arrival, a Homestay Responsibility Agreement between the student and the homestay provider must be signed by both parties. Schools will ensure that the signed agreement clearly specifies the cost, bond, payment, living arrangements and expected standard of behaviour between the parties. The host school will keep the original agreement and provide copies to the student and homestay family.

On arrival, the following will need to be clearly explained to the student as outlined in Homestay Responsibility Agreement for international students:

* house rules
* use of household facilities, such as the washing machine and water use etc.
* making and receiving international calls from home
* internet access and rules

|  |
| --- |
| **Monitoring Homestay** |

Schools will monitor students who are placed in homestay accommodation and maintain regular contact with providers of the accommodation to ensure the students’ successful adjustment to life and study in Victoria.

Schools will also conduct an annual review of their homestay providers and inspect the homestay at least twice per year to ensure that student needs are being met. This requirement is in addition to any reviews that may be conducted by a homestay referral service.

1. **Other Expectations or requirements**

Students and Homestay hosts are expected to treat each other with consideration and respect. Students are reminded that they are guests of the Homestay family. Homestay accommodation is not hotel accommodation. Homestay students must follow the rules set by the Homestay family regarding living in their home.

The Homestay family would normally show students how to get to school and will most likely take them school on their first day.

The Homestay would normally be expected to assist the student if they need to go to a dentist or visit a medical facility or attend a hospital emergency department. Students have full private medical cover.

You will need to apply for a Working with Children Check for all householders 18 years old and above. This will be at no cost to you.

**Working with Children Check**

The WWC Check was introduced by the Department of Justice in 2006 and aims to protect children (under the age of 18 years) from sexual and/or physical harm. People who work or volunteer in certain types of child-related work will be required to apply for a WWC Check. The Department of Justice has advised the International Education Division that people providing homestay accommodation will be required to obtain a WWC Check.

Both homestay parents and any permanent resident or Australian citizens over 18 years of age living or frequently residing at the address are required to obtain a WWC Check before any student is placed in their home (this includes any adult children residing at the address). Providers of homestay accommodation and students will be monitored by the school throughout their stay.

Potential host families who refuse a WWCC cannot host students under any circumstances.

More information on the WWC Check can be found at:

http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/applications/apply+for+a+check/

or from the WWC Check information line 1300 652 879 (local call charge).

Once you have filled in the online application form, you need to go to a [participating Australia Post retail outlet](http://auspost.com.au/)  to lodge your application.

Applications will be receipted and this receipt must be kept as evidence of submitting an application. There is no fee for volunteers; the Department of Justice has indicated to the International Education Division that homestay providers will be considered “volunteers” for the purpose of the WWC Check.

Applicants will automatically pass the WWC Check if they have no relevant criminal offences and will be issued with a WWC Check Card. This card is valid for three years and lists the applicants name, signature, photograph, expiry date and card type, i.e. voluntary.

Complaints will be handled in a timely manner by the College. The College is responsible for resolving any disagreements or disputes that may occur between the student, the student’s parent and the Homestay host. It is imperative that the Homestay host contact the school if there is any disagreement, dispute, discomfort, danger or concern about the student.

Homestay families should assist with general orientation and settling in issues. Host families may initially have to explain directions to the school or English Language Centre, as well as procedures for banking, buying a mobile prepaid card, purchasing public transport tickets and the location of train, tram and bus stops and timetables. Homestay hosts should provide all relevant details, including their name and contact numbers, to the student upon arrival. Likewise, the student should provide the Homestay with relevant contact details for him/herself and any relatives/friends in Australia and overseas.

We would also hope that you include the homestay student in family activities and outings.

**College Contact**

**Ms Sally HUANG International Student Coordinator**

Telephone: 9848 4677

Facsimile: 9840 1390

Mobile: 0400 560 429