



THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE HOMESTAY SCHEME

Information for Prospective Homestay Hosts - February and March programs

The Australian Centre's International Programs

The Australian Centre, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne has been responsible for developing and delivering comprehensive short-term and intensive academic and cultural courses and programs to tertiary level international students, primarily from Japan as well as from other countries for many years. These programs are offered on a consultancy basis and often include homestay accommodation, site visits, internships, fieldtrips (local, interstate or international), events, English language tuition (ESL), and other services.

English Language Programs

Most of the Australian Centre's ESL-based courses are between three and five weeks duration and involve groups of between fifteen to thirty students. The large majority of our non-English speaking international visitors are from Japan, although at times we may have groups from China, Korea, Thailand or other countries.

Becoming a Homestay Host

Hosting a student

As part of the cultural program, the Australian Centre arranges homestays in local households so that overseas students have the opportunity to experience family life in Australia and to discover more about living in Melbourne. For non-English speaking students, Homestay provides an excellent environment in which to practice English. It is also a great opportunity for host families to learn more about other cultures and the focus of our program is on cultural exchange.

The kind of experience that students have whilst they are in Australia is shaped largely by their homestay and by the extent to which they feel they are welcomed into the family or home. Students are very proud of the relationships they develop during homestay and it is consistently rated as the most important and valuable aspect of their program. We believe that by encouraging interaction and

communication between student and host family the experience is enriching and rewarding for all involved.

It is very important that host families and students not treat the homestay as simply a 'boarding' arrangement. The Australian Centre homestay scheme encourages the view that hosting is about enriching the cultural experience and invites the homestay hosts and students to become part of a community for the duration of the groups' stay.

Whilst hosts are not expected to constantly 'entertain' their student nor do we ask that they totally disrupt their household or daily routines, it is requested that they try to include the student in family activities and outings as much as possible. Students are also encouraged to participate in household chores and engage with family members as they would at home.

A farewell party or social function is held at the end of most programs and it is important to students that their homestay hosts make an effort to attend. These functions are an opportunity for host families to meet each other socially and for the students and the program coordinators to thank the homestay hosts and let them know how much their efforts have been appreciated.

Language and Communication

Hosts should be aware that at times it might be difficult to communicate with some of the non-English speaking students due to language levels that can vary greatly within and across groups. As communicating with a non-English speaking student does require some effort (on both parts) and can, at times, be frustrating, it is worth considering how you might respond to such a situation. Many hosts see it as a refreshing challenge and a good opportunity to develop charades skills! Of course, communication will generally improve markedly during the students' stay, not only because of the language lessons but also because of the daily interactions within the homestay environment. Host will require good communication skills to set household boundaries and to explain some cultural boundaries. For example students often are unaware of water restrictions in Melbourne, and if your household is water wise, then you will need to communicate this expectation clearly to your student. Otherwise your student may take 2 showers a day for 15 minutes each!

Responsibilities – Room and Meals

It is the responsibility of hosts to provide students with their **own furnished room**. This should include a bed (with linen), a cupboard (or somewhere to hang/store their clothes), and possibly a desk. In general, hosts provide **Dinner** seven days a week as well as groceries for **self-serve breakfast** (usually cereal, toast, juice) **and lunches** (sandwiches, fruit, instant noodles). Should hosts not be at home on certain evenings, it is their responsibility to make sure a meal or provisions for a

meal is available to their student. Hosts and students should discuss food preferences and allergies as soon as practicable and hosts should attempt to make sure the students' requests are incorporated into the household shopping. Providing meals should not be a stressful part of the arrangement and it is not expected that hosts go to extraordinary lengths to cook special meals nor spend hours in the kitchen. Sharing daily meals is just another way for students to become part of your household. We simply suggest that you continue to have your meals as normal, but just incorporate an extra person, and show some consideration for their likes and dislikes. It is also reasonable to request that the student assist you with food preparation as you would any other family member.

Payments

Hosts will receive \$250 per week (or \$35.70 per day for part weeks) to cover costs. Once registered, all payments will be directly deposited into hosts' bank accounts via electronic transfer. This is the University of Melbourne preferred method of payment. Should you not wish to provide banking details we can arrange for a cheque will be sent out to you. However, you should be aware that the University of Melbourne runs cheque batches once a month only so there may be some delay between hosting and receiving payment. Note: The Australian Centre will administer all payments. Students and hosts DO NOT exchange money directly.

Arrival and Departure

As part of the homestay agreement hosts are responsible for picking up their student from the University on the day of their arrival and also for bringing the student to the University or designated place on the day of their departure. Please note, due to the timing of international flights, the departure may involve an early morning drop off.

Household Arrangements

The Australian Centre will provide students with a general briefing regarding living in a homestay family in Australia when they arrive, and we encourage them to ask lots of questions during their stay. We strongly recommend that you let your student know your normal household arrangements (use of telephone, internet, cooking, showering times, meal times, household chores, laundry routine, rules regarding smoking, having friends over, etc.) as soon as practicable, to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. For non-English speaking students especially, these arrangements may need to be written down and carefully explained, in order to avoid miscommunication.

Culture Shock & Duty of Care

Hosts should be aware that students are likely to experience some form of culture shock whilst staying with them and it is part of their responsibility to make the transition as easy as possible. The best way to do this is to make sure the home is

a welcoming and understanding one. Hosts have a duty of care to their student and should ensure the student receives medical attention if unwell and have some idea of the students' whereabouts.

Support

Because we are concerned that both hosts and students are comfortable and happy with the homestay arrangements, the International Programs staff at The Australian Centre are available to discuss with you, or your student, any problems arising from homestay arrangements. There will also be a 24-hour contact person or counsellor available to you and your student. We encourage you to contact us with any queries or problems you might have, no matter how small they may seem.

Registration

If you wish to register your interest in becoming a homestay host with us, please complete the registration form, which is available from the following website:

<http://www.australian.unimelb.edu.au/international/homestay.html>

The form should be returned to:

The Homestay Coordinator of International Programs
The Australian Centre,
University of Melbourne
Room 108, Old Quad
CARLTON, 3010

Once your registration has been received, we will contact you to arrange an interview in person at a mutually suitable time.

You may also fax (03 9347 7731) or email the completed form to us via the details provided below.

Liz Agostino, 8344 6138 agostino@unimelb.edu.au
Manager

Chay Granger, 8344 8226 cgranger@unimelb.edu.au
Coordinator