



# AHN

**Australian Homestay  
Network**

# Guest Handbook

**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 Australia, learning about Australian culture and living with a new family (at least for a little while).

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 have the best start in Australia, meet new people and create memories that will stay with you forever.

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. There are so many amazing experiences in store for you. We encourage you to enjoy all the opportunities that come your way and make the most of your time in homestay. Please get in touch if you need us.

All the best!





## The BEST Homestay Program in Australia



### 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

We'll match you with a host based on your AHN profile preferences

You'll be treated like a member of the family

Share meals with your hosts or prepare your own

Take part in family activities and outings

#### 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

#### 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

All hosts must complete an in-home interview, house inspection, Working With Children Check and/or Police check and host training

#### World-class service

Comprehensive pre-departure orientation

24/7 emergency line

Your homestay will include a private bedroom with study space, internet and access to communal areas in the home

Optional airport pick-up

#### 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 mobile obilephone/SIM card

Find out where to shop

Get the best information about local recreation and entertainment venues

## The Homestay Experience

### 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. All hosts 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.





## 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.
- ✚ Internet and access to shared household facilities (bathroom, laundry, kitchen, etc.).
- ✚ Meals as per your chosen homestay package.
- ✚ Homestay management and support throughout the entire homestay experience.
- ✚ Automated online payment services.
- ✚ Professionally staffed 24/7 critical incident hotline.
- ✚ Pre-arrival orientation provided by AHN and post-arrival orientation with your host.
- ✚ Comprehensive online training for hosts.
- ✚ Insurance that provides coverage for damages, injury and your belongings whilst in the homestay.



## 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. Your host will also conduct an orientation with you soon after you arrive at your homestay.



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

### Meals (supplied meals vary depending on the homestay package selected)

- ✚ Breakfast will often be self-serve (you make the meal with food provided).
- ✚ Your host will either provide you with a packed lunch or offer a selection of foods for you to pack your own.
- ✚ 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.
- ✚ It is polite to let your host family know if you plan on going out and what time you are going to be home.
- ✚ Keep your mobile 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 footpath 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.
- ✚ 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.
- ✚ AHN and your host family will not be responsible for any incidences involving a pre-existing medical condition.





## 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

- ✚ All travellers entering Australia are subject to inspection by Australian Border Force and/or Department of Agriculture Biosecurity Officers to ensure you are complying

with immigration, customs and agriculture regulations. Visit the Australian Government's [Department of Home Affairs website](#) for more information.

- ✚ Make sure you have the following with you when you arrive in Australia:
  - ✓ valid passport with a copy of your student visa
  - ✓ letter of offer from your school
  - ✓ Confirmation of Enrolment (eCoE) issued by your school
  - ✓ Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) policy
  - ✓ receipts of any related payments you have made including tuition fees, health cover, etc.
  - ✓ original or certified copies of your academic transcripts and qualifications
  - ✓ personal identification documents e.g. birth certificate, ID card, driver's licence
  - ✓ medical records and/or prescriptions
  - ✓ AHN airport pick-up, emergency and host family contacts
- ✚ 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. You must request this service in advance via your AHN profile or by contacting your local AHN office (fees apply).

### **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.

### **Travelling by Bike or Car**

- ✚ For safety reasons you should always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle and a seat belt when in a car.
- ✚ Rideshare services (e.g. Uber, Lyft, etc.) may not be used by students under the age of 18.
- ✚ If you plan on driving while in homestay, you need to include this on your AHN homestay application as parking is not available at all host residences.
- ✚ Students under the age of 18 are not permitted to drive.
- ✚ Driving "under the influence" of alcohol or drugs is a criminal offence.
- ✚ You will need a valid driver's license to drive in Australia. As a temporary measure you can use your licence from your home country as long as it is current and valid. If your licence is not in English, you may also be required to carry a certified translation in English or apply for an International Driving Permit from your home country. More information about [driving with an overseas licence](#) can be found on the Austroads website.
- ✚ Along with obeying all state and national road rules, the vehicle must be registered and you are required to have Compulsory Third Party (CTP) insurance. As CTP



insurance provides limited coverage, it is recommended you consider taking out additional insurance.

- ✚ *Studies in Australia* has written a great blog post about [driving in Australia as an international student](#).

The above is a guide only. As a visitor to Australia, it is your responsibility to ensure you are familiar with the country's driving laws before operating a motor vehicle and abide by all regulations at all times. AHN cannot be held liable for any traffic incidents caused by one of its homestay participants.

### Obeying the Law

- ✚ The legal drinking age in Australia is 18. It is also against the law to purchase alcohol for anyone under the age of 18.
- ✚ You must be 18 or older to purchase cigarettes and other tobacco products (e-cigarettes, cigars, etc.). Be aware that certain spaces are designated as smoke-free zones; more about this legislation can be found on the [Tobacco in Australia website](#).
- ✚ Australia has strict drug regulations. Be sure to educate yourself about [drugs laws in Australia](#) as they may differ from your home country.
- ✚ International students must abide by state and federal laws while in Australia. Violation of certain laws may lead to fines, arrest, cancellation of your visa, deportation from Australia, and potentially being banned from returning to Australia in the future.

## 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).

