

# Homestay Guidelines for Hosts

---

## What is Homestay?

Homestay is a program in which carefully selected families located within easy access to the College are chosen to host international students during their stay in Australia. The College facilitates Homestay arrangements between hosts and a student, however, once a student is placed, it is essentially a goodwill agreement between the parties. The arrangement is purely voluntary, no contracts are signed, and accommodation is not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act.

This document is designed to assist Homestay Hosts (HH) understand the nature of the Homestay and the expectations of the College to achieve a mutually successful experience for Hosts and students.

Participation in the program is contingent on Hosts and students agreeing to and following these guidelines. Mater Christi College will use these guidelines as the primary reference for the resolution of disputes and misunderstandings.

## Homestay Host Responsibilities

The primary aim of a Homestay is to provide a welcoming home environment and a family which is actively engaged in the physical, emotional, academic and social needs of international students. The College has significant responsibilities for the welfare of international students and HHs are expected to apply College expectations at all times to support student wellbeing.

It is also a government requirement that all members of a Homestay household over the age of 18 hold a current “Working with Children Check”. The College must also be notified of any changes in the residents of a Homestay.

Specifically, the Homestay Host has the authority and responsibility to:

- **advise and assist with making the appropriate decisions in the event of an emergency**
  - *contact with the College as soon as practical is essential in these circumstances*
  
- **liaise with the College regarding attendance, homework, behaviour and discipline, and other matters relevant to the enrolment of the student**
  - *sign on behalf of parents for permission notes etc*
  - *contact the Pastoral Teacher regarding academic concerns*
  - *contact the Absence line to notify of late arrival or absence*
  - *contact the Homestay Coordinator on home related matters*
  - *contact the International Student Coordinator on broader student issues*
  
- **support the academic progress of the student, attend interviews as required and liaise with other HHs as requested by the College**
  - *monitor quantity and quality of study and lifestyle balance*
  - *provide appropriate study environment*
  - *monitor progress via Parent Portal (if student and family agree to provide access)*

- **ensure the maintenance of the student’s safety and security**
  - ensure that students have access to their Safety Card at all times
  - do not leave the students at home alone overnight
  - ensure safe travel practices especially at night, ie not traveling alone on public transport after dark
    - students below Year 11 may not travel alone on public transport (except to & from school)
    - student 18 years or older may use taxi or uber transport
  - promote an awareness of unsafe situations
  - know the whereabouts of the student at all times
  - ensure the student’s phone is charged and switched on when they are out
  - ensure the student has relevant emergency contacts in her mobile phone
  - ensure that you are contactable at all times
  - maintain records of student contacts and movements via the Homestay Log Book
  
- **support the health and medical well-being of the student and promote her social and emotional welfare**
  - encourage appropriate sleep patterns
  - promote and provide for healthy eating
  - arrange appropriate medical appointments and transport
  - advise the College of any health and welfare concerns
  - enable occasional social outings or approved sleep-over with friends
  
- **assist the student with practical functions eg. banking, budgeting and money management, travel and transport arrangements, telephone and computer requirements, shopping, securing valuables, the local environment, safety and other daily needs**
  - providing transport to and from the station or bus stop if it is more than a 15—20 minute walk
  - providing transport to and from the airport when students go home. Students are expected to discuss suitable flight dates and times with their HHs. The College encourages HHs to liaise with other families to coordinate airport trips. There is no obligation to provide transport when a student travels outside the scheduled term breaks. Refer to fee schedule for airport transfers.
  
- **provide opportunities for the student to experience Australian culture and lifestyle and to practice English conversation in the home**
  
- **ensure that the student is aware of relevant Australian/Victorian laws**
  - any employment is within visa conditions
  - appropriate fare payment on public transport
  
- **be available on call for the student or family, 24 hours a day,**
  - this could include via voicemail and email
  
- **be familiar with the College “Student Protection (Child Safety) Policy”, available on the College website, and sign the Code of Conduct form annually.**

## Daily Routine

Good sleeping patterns are very important for the health and welfare of adolescents. Patterns of late nights with excessive use of internet or video or study can escalate into poor sleep habits and be damaging for academic progress. At the same time, this should be balanced with positive social activity and appropriate sleeping-in on weekends and holidays. Below are recommended routines for students in Homestay. The Homestay Coordinator should be advised of students resisting these times.

Sunday to Thursday (Friday & Saturday ½ hour later)

|              |         |                                  |         |            |
|--------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|------------|
| Years 7 – 8  | 9.00pm  | Preparation for bed and next day | 9.30pm  | Lights out |
| Years 9 – 10 | 9.30pm  | “ “                              | 10.00pm | “ “        |
| Year 11      | 10.00pm | “ “                              | 10.30pm | “ “        |
| Year 12      | 10.00pm | “ “                              | 11.00pm | “ “        |

## Health and Emergencies

All students have private health insurance. Students can be taken to a local doctor, Chinese speaking doctor or hospital emergency as required. HH should retain a copy of the health insurance card.

## Meals

Homestay Hosts are required to:

- Prepare and provide students with dinner 7 nights a week
- Provide a selection of healthy snacks
- Provide adequate ingredients for students to make their own breakfast and lunch. Students should be allowed to cook a hot breakfast or lunch on condition that everything used is cleaned and cleared away.

International students are generally adaptable to different foods. Ask what kind of food they like, perhaps take them shopping for food and meal ideas. Students should be encouraged to try new food and to communicate their preferences.

Fresh food should constitute the bulk of ingredients. Breakfast and lunch may include cereal, fruit, cold meats, salads etc. Some international students enjoy noodles and rice as a staple, even for breakfast.

Be mindful that students may be shy and not confident in requesting particular foods or expressing a dislike for other foods. Sometimes “No” or “Yes” can be an expression of politeness rather than a students’ preferred tastes.

## Student's Rooms

Student’s rooms should have comfortable beds with adequate blankets, study desk, desk lamp, wardrobe space and drawers. A heater should be provided if the home is not centrally heated. The HH should provide fresh linen every fortnight or more frequently if required. The room should remain a private space for the student.

Students are expected to clean their own rooms and to keep them tidy.

## Student’s Bathrooms

It is expected that a student would be sharing a bathroom/toilet with only one or two others. Students are expected to keep their bathroom clean and to appropriately dispose of personal and sanitary items.

## Telephone

Students should be assisted to buy a pre-paid SIM from a local carrier and to ensure renewal as required. Discuss the time difference between Australia and other countries and discourage late night calls.

## Internet

Students will need access to WIFI to support their studies and communication with family and friends. Clarify any download limits that apply and advise students on the feasibility of video downloads.

It is not appropriate for students to be using the internet late at night and into the early hours of the morning.

Where excessive late night usage occurs, HH may restrict access.

## Keys

HHs are required to provide students with house keys for the duration of their stay. There should be no deposit asked for the key. Students should be allowed to come and go from the house as freely as other members of the household.

## Transport

All public transport users aged between 5 and 18 years (under 19) can purchase a child myki and pay a concession fare. Students over 16 years must carry proof of age identification. Students should be assisted to purchase a MYKI card and shown how to use it. The Metro PT App provides valuable information on schedules and delays.

HHs are not expected to drive students to the College, but they are expected to show them how to use public transport.

As in all large cities, there are elements of safety to be considered when travelling on public transport.

It is considered unsafe to travel alone on public transport after dark without adequate supervision or without an adult companion such as a teacher, Host, or person approved by the Host. If circumstances force a student to travel by train outside the recommended hours, she should contact the Host by telephone and provide details of the train on which she is travelling and its arrival time at the nearest station to the home so that she can be met and picked up.

### **Laundry and Household Duties**

The Homestay needs to provide all laundry needs for bed and bathroom linen and offer use of necessary equipment for laundering and ironing items. Laundry arrangements which suit the household should be negotiated with individual students.

In most Australian homes, young people are expected to perform one or two light duties such as washing dishes, preparing the table for meals, cleaning or ironing. The Homestay may request the student to assist with these tasks, as the Homestay might of their own family. It is important to note that the Homestay is not employed by the student to act as a servant, nor is the student to be used as a servant by the Homestay.

### **Television and other entertainment**

For the sake of the students' studies and HH internet plans, the HH should ensure that the student does not engage in excessive screen-time. However, watching some local television is an excellent way of learning English, so an even balance should be maintained.

### **Friends and overnight stay**

HHs should be mindful that as students make friends, occasionally they may ask to have a friend over for dinner or to sleep overnight. Students are expected to ask permission and the choice is entirely up to HHs. Conversely, students will occasionally be asked to dinner or to stay overnight at a friend's home. They are expected to obtain HH permission before making any firm commitment.

Students may only stay overnight at other places with approval of the parents and the HH. Any overnight stay should be carefully verified by the HH and full contact details maintained.

### **Staying out at night**

Ask students to let you know if they are not coming home for dinner, or will be staying at a friend's house. Prior consent must be obtained with adequate time for the HH to consider the request. Treat such requests as you would from your own child. Parental consent via email to the host is required before a student can stay overnight at a place unknown to the HH or College.

### **Visitors and Boyfriends**

Most Homestays are happy to have students invite friends home occasionally. Students should not abuse the privilege by inviting friends too frequently. Before any friend can be invited to stay it is essential to get permission from the HH. The same applies if the student is asked to visit a friend.

It is part of every girl's life to experience friendships with boys and the College does not wish to restrict such contact. However, if it appears to the HH that too much time is being spent with a boyfriend, then they should recommend that the amount of time be reduced.

If a male friend visits the home, it would be unwise for that person to be in the girl's room unless accompanied by a third person.

If such an issue causes difficulty within the home, guidance may be sought from the Homestay Coordinator but should, under most circumstances, be a matter for the Host.

## Part-time Employment

The College has no objection to students working in part-time employment, providing it does not interfere with studies or cause her HH any major inconvenience. It is essential that the student inform the HH of her intention to find part-time work so that any arrangements can be agreed upon before the student applies for the job.

It would be considered unacceptable for the student to work outside reasonable distance from the Homestay. "Reasonable distance" depends on access to public transport during daylight hours. The Homestay may not wish to travel to collect the student from her place of employment, if her working hours are late or the distance from home is unreasonable. This matter needs to be discussed and agreed upon with the Homestay. The student must be contactable by mobile phone at all times.

The College also requires written approval from a parent before supporting employment arrangements. Students should be made aware of their entitlements (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment/international-students/pages/default.aspx>) and should be discouraged from working for "cash in hand".

The Australian Government sets limits on the hours that international students may work and the College recommends no more than 6 hours a week. Students may work full time during their school vacations.

## Maintaining Contact

Some of the students are over 18 years of age and are legally adults in Australia. However, while they are students of the College and living in a Homestay, it is still required that they inform the HH of where they are AT ALL TIMES. They must also be contactable by mobile phone AT ALL TIMES.

## Log Book

The College requires use of a log book to record details of student movement and contact details.

## Cultural Differences

Cultural difference is about different values and perspectives and the notion of what is reasonable often varies between cultures and nations. Even within Australia there exist cultural differences, though minor, from state to state. Mater Christi believes that the key to a successful relationship between HHs and students is communication. To avoid misunderstandings, HHs and students should always be prepared to discuss freely and openly any issues that arise. Remember, that some things you may consider normal may not be so in a student's home country.

## English Conversation

Students should be encouraged to speak English with their host families as much as possible. In Homestays with more than one student it's easy for students to lapse into their native language, however in common areas with host families English should be spoken. This assists the student to function more readily in society and also assists with their learning at school.

## Homesickness

Following the "high" of arrival and the experience of a new country it is common for international students to experience "low" periods and moments of homesickness. While the pattern may vary, experience shows that this is normal. For instance, the effort of continually speaking English can be tiring and some students will withdraw to their rooms. HHs should be understanding of this and should help students by both respecting their need for privacy and offering any moral support and encouragement they feel is appropriate. Reassure them that you understand how they are feeling, comfort them, and make them feel welcome and reassured.

## Payments

Homestay fees are set by Mater Christi College, reviewed annually and published in the International Student Terms and Conditions.

- The minimum length for Homestay is four weeks with a four weeks' notice of termination.
- A weekly Homestay fee is payable directly to HH. Mater Christi recommends that payments be made every four weeks in advance. Longer payment periods may be arranged by mutual agreement.
- A one-off holding fee equal to one week's homestay is payable for the summer vacation period to reserve a room.

- A holding fee equal to 50% of one week's homestay is payable per week if a student is absent for a week or more.
- Normal homestay payments must be made for periods of non-residence due to late return or early departure for holidays. In this situation, students may be required to arrange their own airport transfer.
- Airport transfers provided by the HH are charged as per the fee schedule in the Terms and Conditions.

## **Contacts**

For further details please contact the Homestay Co-ordinator, Saskia van Schie, ( 0400 666 371 or [vanschies@materchristi.edu.au](mailto:vanschies@materchristi.edu.au) )