



GOLD COAST STUDENT ACCOMMODATION CENTRE

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INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

We hope that you will enjoy your Homestay experience. Remember, your Homestay Coordinator is here to help you. If you have any questions about Homestay please contact our office.

Homestay should be a positive and rewarding experience. This information is designed to help you adjust to life with your Homestay family as quickly as possible so that the cultural exchange is a happy one. Please use it as a guide and seek further assistance from your Homestay family or Homestay Coordinator if you wish to have any points clarified.

All families have undergone an orientation process, homes have been inspected and your family will have support from the Homestay Coordinators if they experience any difficulties hosting students. Families apply to take part in the program to experience a cross cultural exchange, to learn from you about your country and to teach their children to understand people from all over the world.

Although Homestay may require you to confront fundamental differences between cultures and a different way of living, the benefits certainly outweigh any problems you may encounter – if you let them!

Please remember that your Homestay Coordinator is available any time to help with any difficulties and if you have a problem please call the Homestay Coordinator straight away so that they may assist you.

Communication is the Key!

Communication is the most important ability to develop. Communication skills will allow any uncertainties you may have to be openly discussed and your fears dealt with. Your family will not mind how many questions you ask or how often you speak to them. Try to remember that they will want to make your stay with them a happy one but may not realise you are unhappy about something unless you tell them. Smile and explain politely if there is something you do not understand. They will be more than happy to assist you to adapt to your new lifestyle.

Homestay makes it Easy!

Homestay provides a safe, protected environment from the moment you arrive without the worry of finding somewhere to live; having electricity and telephone connected and not having to do the shopping. Your family will also help with familiarising you to your new surroundings and the journey to your place of study. You will have your own room (if you have not requested twin-share) and a comfortable bed, some rooms will have a study desk and lamp, and you will be provided two or three meals a day depending upon the package that you have requested.

For more mature students, since families live close to a bus-stop, families do not provide transport unless this has been specifically requested (and is an extra cost) so students are expected to catch a bus to their place of study. Unless you have requested Room Only accommodation, the Homestay family will spend evening meals with you and converse with you so that your level of English will greatly improve.

Leaving Homestay

Should you leave your Homestay for any reason, please make sure that you have paid any outstanding telephone or other bills and that you let your place of study know your new address. This is a condition of your visa requirements. If you choose to leave your Homestay family before the end of your contract period, you are required to give two weeks' notice or no refund of monies already paid will be given.

A Little about Australians

Australians do not discriminate – it is against the law.

Please note that Australia welcomes people from all nations and our program reflects this. Under Australian law all citizens are equal. This means that men and women are equal and it does not matter what country a person comes from, they will be treated as an equal and you should treat them as equal.

Consequently you may find that you are placed in Homestay with Australians who have not been born in Australia. English may be their second language too! However they will be fluent in English even if they have an accent and the husband and wife may come from different countries. Your Homestay family may consist of a single woman who may, or may not have children. This is part of our culture – the culture of a country you are coming to live in!

Your Homestay family may also have animals. Sometimes dogs and cats live inside the house with the family, sometimes outside.

In the majority of families in Australia both the wife and husband go out to work. Wives do not necessarily stay home and are not servants to their families. You will be required to assist generally, just as their own children do, in light tasks such as setting the table, washing up and keeping your own room clean and tidy. You will be expected to do your own laundry unless your Homestay family offers to do this for you. If you do not know how to do this then they will teach you.

When living in a private home, remember that a courteous and considerate attitude is always appreciated. Each member is treated equally and with respect. It is important to smile and say “please” when you ask for something and “thank you” when you receive it.

Some Expectations your Family May Have

Courtesy

Your family will expect to know where you are at all times. If you are not returning home for your evening meal you must let your family know before they have cooked your dinner. A telephone call at lunch time is all that is needed. If your family is at work then ask them how you may leave a message. If you are staying out with your friends, again please let your family know – this may be done by telephone. Please also ask your family first before inviting friends to your family’s home.

Remember, always be friendly, polite and courteous to your family, they have opened their home to you. Although informal, Australians do not like to be late for appointments so if you have been invited to visit or meet a family friend it is important to be on time.

Using the Bathroom and Toilet

It is most important to communicate with your family regarding the use of the bathroom. Australians usually shower although most houses have a bathtub. In many parts of Australia there are drought areas. You will not be able to fill the bath or use as much water as you may like. Perhaps one-third to half full will be the most hot water you may use. Check with your host family first.

Most homes have a hot water system from which hot water is run directly into the bath. This hot water is electrically heated and therefore limited. We do not have gas systems such as you may have at home. If you fill the bath with hot water, there will be no hot water for anyone else to bath or shower. Showering should be kept to around five minutes.

Ask your host parents how long you may use the bathroom. Usually ten minutes will be the maximum, but check to be certain. You should not occupy the bathroom for more than fifteen minutes or others will be kept waiting. When you have finished using the bathroom please clean the bathroom and wipe down any areas where you have splashed water. If you do not know how to use the bathroom, please ask your Homestay family and they will be happy to explain to you.

It is usual to sit on the toilet seat in Australia. Please do not stand on the toilet seat as you may break it. Always leave the bathroom clean and tidy as you find it. Remember to flush the toilet after you have used it. Used toilet paper is flushed down the toilet, not placed into rubbish bins.

Hygiene

In Australia it is not acceptable to spit. If you need to spit please leave the room and use the sink or toilet in the bathroom. It is considered polite to blow your nose into a handkerchief or tissue but it is not polite to sniff. When burping or letting off wind (farting) it is polite to say "Excuse me".

Due to the heat and humidity in summer which causes people to sweat, it is advised that you wash yourself with soap in the shower once a day, and use deodorant to avoid body odour. You are expected to provide your own toiletries. However the family will provide toilet paper and laundry powder.

Using the Telephone

Please ask your host family before you use the telephone so that you can arrange to pay for your telephone calls. The easiest way to make international calls is to use a telephone card. Please ensure that you pay your telephone account with your family before you move out.

There is information regarding the use of the telephone in the White Pages Telephone Directory. Make sure that you do not use the telephone to make calls, or to receive calls during the late evening (after 9pm) or during the night. This is not appropriate or acceptable in Australia. Keep telephone calls to a minimum so that the telephone is available for other family members to use.

Using your family's items

Please ask your family's permission to use the television or other items and how to use them correctly.

Using a Heater or Air Conditioner

In winter your family may give you a heater. Turn it off before going to sleep and sleep under the blankets or cover on the bed. It is dangerous to leave a heater on all night as it is a fire hazard and make sure it is turned off before leaving the house.

Alternatively if using a fan or air conditioner to keep cool in summer, please ensure it is switched off before leaving the house. Do not turn the temperature below 24 degrees or it uses too much electricity.

Sleeping with the Lights on

It is usual to sleep with the lights off in Australia and considered wasteful of energy resources to leave lights on all night. However, some children use a special night light if they are afraid of the dark and your family may be able to provide you with this, or help you buy one – they are not expensive.

Security

Most bedroom doors do not have locks. If you close your door it will act as a sign to your family that you do not wish to be disturbed. If you are returning home before your family returns then they will give you a front door key so you can get in. If they do not do this, then ask for one politely. If you are going out and no one else is at home, please ensure you lock the door when leaving.

Other Family Members

If you plan to have a family member stay in Australia then please advise the Homestay Coordinator who will assist in finding suitable accommodation. At times, if given enough notice perhaps they will be able to stay with your host family although it may be difficult to find the space in the family's home.

Guests

Though at times your Homestay family will be happy to have your friends over, if you would like to have a guest visit please ask your Homestay family if it is alright. You should not invite a friend to stay overnight without your Homestay family's permission. Please don't forget that you are in somebody's home and not a hotel.

Recycling is a popular trend in Australia

You may notice your family has two rubbish bins. Ask your family to let you know the correct usage of these bins.

Inappropriate Questions

Asking personal questions can sometimes cause embarrassment. In Australia it is considered impolite to ask a person's age, occupation or religion. It is also impolite to ask how much money someone earns or whether they own their own home. To tell someone they are fat or ugly is considered extremely rude. Australians respect each other and recognise friends and relations as equals.

Alcohol, Smoking & Drugs

The legal age for drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes in Australia is 18 years and you cannot buy either without identification to show you are over 18 years old. There are heavy fines for people who drive while under the influence of alcohol. You are permitted to drive with a blood alcohol content of less than 0.05% – approximately two glasses of beer, depending on your body weight and the alcohol content e.g. light beer, mid-strength, etc. All drivers may be stopped and tested by police to see if they have been drinking.

Most families will only allow smoking outside their home. If you smoke please, ask your host family where you may smoke. Smoking is not allowed in buses and public buildings. Many places have designated outside smoking areas.

In Australian hotels and bars, you should expect to pay for each drink as you buy it. The Australian custom of "shouting" means that if someone buys you a drink you are expected to "shout" him or her back by buying them a drink. If you wish to bring alcohol into your host family's home please ask permission first. If alcohol is offered, you may choose if you wish to drink it or not.

The use of drugs and drug trafficking is illegal in Australia and carries heavy penalties.

If you are Unhappy – Policy for moving to another Homestay family

You may seek assistance if you feel that you need help in settling in to your family's home. Moving Homestay is not encouraged and not an automatic process. It is at the discretion of the Homestay Coordinator and cannot be decided by your agent or friends. It is in your own interest to try to make appropriate changes by understanding your family's household. Remember that communication is the key!

Gold Coast Student Accommodation Centre has in place grievance procedures which are designed to manage complaints from all Homestay stakeholders. To make a complaint please call 5527 8688 or 0437 278 686 and explain the situation. The Homestay Manager will investigate and report back to you on the best course of action. If the family has breached any rules for hosting students in accordance with GCSAC's policies, you will be moved immediately.

It is suggested that you try to work with your family to get along and resolve any problems. If the situation seems resolved, the coordinator will monitor the situation and contact you and your family to make sure that everything is progressing smoothly. If matters cannot be resolved, you will be moved to another Homestay at no further cost.

You will be moved once only as GCSAC feels that after two unsuccessful Homestay placements students may not be suited to Homestay and another type of accommodation should be found. We will assist with this where possible.

However if you break the law, are repeatedly intoxicated, become violent or aggressive or act inappropriately towards your Homestay family, you will be asked to leave the Homestay family immediately and find alternative accommodation at your own cost. In this situation, no refund of monies will be given due to breach of contract.

Remember, we are here to ensure you have a successful Homestay experience whilst living and studying on the Gold Coast and will do everything in our power to assist you to achieve this goal.