Host responsibilities

Information to students on homestay host responsibilities

2 September 2014

Homestay Accommodation Services (HAS) offers a standardised program for international students studying at Monash University and other institutions that use the HAS program. While the performance and quality of each individual homestay experience will vary, the parameters for the homestay environment should stay the same.

You are encouraged to work through issues with your homestay host directly. This is one of the important challenges presented by the homestay experience. If you cannot achieve a satisfactory resolution, you should speak to a HAS staff member. HAS staff will endeavour to resolve the issue firstly by encouraging both you and your host to discuss the issue further, then by speaking to both parties. If there is still no resolution, HAS staff will take any further action required.

Grievance

If your complaint is not resolved, you may make a written request for resolution of the matter with the Grievance Officer, Dr Greg Cusack. This matter is now considered to be a grievance. For full details of the Complaints Policy and the Grievance Policy, please follow the link below.


If you feel your concerns/issues have not been properly dealt with, you should contact Consumer Affairs Victoria, Level 2/452 Flinders St, Melbourne 3000. Telephone 1300 55 81 81 or email consumer@justice.vic.gov.au

Privacy Act

The information you supply to HAS will be used solely for the purposes of the Homestay program. Your homestay host details are to be used only for the purposes of the homestay placement and must be treated confidentially.

Each member in the homestay relationship has certain responsibilities. As the homestay student, your responsibilities are clearly outlined in your Memorandum of Understanding which you acknowledged on your Homestay Online Application http://webapp.mcpl.monash.edu.au/homestay-sql/studentonline/

General information about your placement

1. Your Homestay can only host up to three international students at any one time. There are many international students studying in Melbourne so these students could be from Monash University or other institutions.
2. During your stay, you will be provided with your own bedroom which should have a bed, linen, study desk, chair, lamp and storage space for your belongings.
3. Homestay hosts are encouraged to treat their students as a “member of the family” and apply the same standards as they would towards their own family members.
4. If someone on your Host Profile is listed as a ‘Visitor’, he or she is generally a person who does not normally live in the home but may visit your host while you are living with them.
5. Your host should make you aware of all household rules at the start of your stay. You are encouraged to clarify the rules if you have any queries. Please do not be offended if your host insists you only spend four minutes in the shower as Melbourne has water restrictions.
6. The Homestay experience is designed to assist students to develop their English skills. Your host should speak to you in English and be proactive about communicating in English. Even when you are not being directly addressed, hosts should still communicate with each other only in English.
7. You should advise HAS staff if information about your host family members, pets, etc differs from your pre-arrival information.
8. Your host will be concerned about your welfare, health, privacy and security while you are in their home. Just as it is the homestay host’s responsibility to know of your whereabouts, you must also let them know where you are going.
9. It is important to note that the homestay arrangement **must not** be considered a hotel service.

10. Your host will provide you with three meals a day seven days a week. They may give you cut (sandwich) lunches during the week. It is common for homestay students to make their own breakfast and lunch but this varies from household to household.

11. When eating out, you should offer to pay for yourself. However, if you do not want the extra expense of eating out, you should discuss this with your host. If you do not join your homestay family when they eat out, your host will provide you with a meal at home.

12. Your host can only charge you for using their internet and telephone. It is important to keep the homestay relationship clear of financial matters. You must be careful not to overuse utilities in the home such as electricity and water. All payments to your host, except for telephone and Internet, are managed by HAS. (Please note: not all homes have wireless internet access).

13. Transport in Australia is often quite different to the transport in your own country. Your host will assist you to use public transport and ensure that you are confident to make your own way to and from school/university. Your host is encouraged to travel at least once with you on public transport. **Be careful about travelling at night**, especially when using public transport. Please note that your Homestay Host is not obliged to provide transport for you.

14. Your homestay is required to respect your privacy just as you should respect their privacy. You should not compare your homestay with other students’ homestays. If your host compares their students with other students or comments on other families and you have any serious concerns, you can refer the matter to HAS.

15. You are not expected to baby sit or child mind. If your homestay host asks you to do this, you should tell them you are not obliged to do this and then report the matter to HAS.

16. Your Homestay host should provide you with your own key or organise a suitable alternative that gives you access to the house. If you feel that it is difficult to access the home while the family is out and your needs are compromised, you should talk to your host or to HAS.

17. If your host mother goes away for the weekend or for a longer period, proper arrangements should be made for you. Your host should inform HAS of these changes.

18. Your host has been informed that personal greetings and farewells differ from culture to culture. In many Asian countries, it is common to bow. In other countries it is common to shake hands or kiss on each cheek. For some cultures, a hug is also considered an acceptable display of affection. A lot depends on how well people know each other beforehand.
   a. Both hosts and students need to understand that physical contact and displays of affections should be in a manner that will not offend or make others feel uncomfortable.
   b. If you ever feel uncomfortable about how a homestay family member shows affection to you, you can take the lead and demonstrate to them what would make you feel comfortable in this area. If you find it difficult to communicate about this matter, talk to HAS.

19. All members of your Homestay family aged 18 and over have provided valid Working with Children Checks (similar to police check) to HAS as a form of reference/security. We do not ask you to do the same. Remember: just as you might feel anxious in a new environment, homestay family members may also feel this way with a new person coming into their home. It is as important for you to make people feel comfortable as it is for your family.

   **Enjoy your stay in Australia!**