

BROWNS

English Language School



HOMESTAY GUIDELINES

STUDENTS

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Your Home Away from Home

We're excited to have you stay with a BROWNS family and want you to have the best possible experience while you complete your studies in Australia. This includes making sure that you feel safe and secure throughout your homestay experience.

This guide will give you the resources to:

- feel comfortable with your homestay family
- connect with the support you need to enjoy your time in Australia
- get the most out of your Australian homestay experience.

BROWNS Accommodation Services Contacts

If you have any concerns, or require any assistance, please contact us.

Email: accommodation@browns.edu.au

Queensland – Brisbane and Gold Coast

Office Hours - Ph: + 61 7 3221 7871

After Hours Emergency Phone - Ph: +61 (0) 431 032 276

Victoria – Melbourne

Office Hours - Ph: + 61 3 8652 1955

After Hours Emergency Phone - Ph: +61 (0) 411 209 002

Getting to know your homestay family

Homestay families are carefully selected, and some have been hosting international students for many years. You'll find your homestay family warm, welcoming and active in the local community. They will ensure you feel safe and happy so you can make the most of your time in Australia.

You will be matched with a host family at least two weeks prior to your stay. Their details will be sent to your education agent or parent in a document called the Homestay Profile. This includes photographs of the homestay house and contact details for your homestay parents.

You may like to learn a little more about your homestay family, and even contact them, before arriving in Australia.

What to expect from your homestay family

Your homestay family will provide you with:

- a safe, secure, welcoming place to live
- a separate room for your personal use

- requested food package
- facilities – a bed, wardrobe, towels and linen
- utilities – gas, electricity, heating and water costs, internet
- cleaning services of common living areas
- the use of living areas within the residence
- study facilities – desk and study light
- get the most out of your Australia homestay experience.

A typical homestay family

Australia is a culturally diverse country with many differences in family structure and background. There is no 'typical' Australian family, so there isn't really a typical homestay family.

Your homestay family may be quite different to your own family. They may also be a little different to your expectations and even not quite the same as the homestay families of other students in the program.

What every homestay family has in common is a commitment to providing a welcoming, safe home environment. Some students are surprised at the different types of families in Australia. Here are some things that may be different culturally from your home country.

- Your homestay family may be a single person or a couple, with or without children.
- Gender roles in the home are less prominent in Australia than in some other countries. Both parents might cook and/or clean, and children also help their parents around the house.
- Women often continue to work after having a family.
- Australia is a multicultural country and families will be made up of people from different nationalities.

Day-to-day living with your homestay family

The average weekday in an Australian family might be different from your home country. Some things about day-to-day life to consider.

- Work hours vary but are often between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm.
- School hours are usually between 9am and 3:00pm.
- In the afternoons and evenings, many Australian children participate in activities such as sport or music lessons, and complete homework.
- Many families will often eat dinner together (this may be at a dinner table, at the kitchen bench or even in front of the TV).
- Weekend activities might also be different from what you are used to at home.

You may live in a:

- free-standing house
- townhouse
- apartment.
- In many Australian homes the kitchen is often the centre of activity. Your homestay

- may also have a garden or a balcony.
- Homestay family pets
Some homestay families will have pets such as:
 - a cat
 - a dog
 - guinea pigs
 - even chickens!
- Children will often have extra-curricular activities such as language classes, sport or performing arts.
- Families will often do their housework, do grocery shopping and prepare for the week ahead, at the weekend.
- Some families might go to visit relatives, friends or on outings to visit local tourist destinations, at weekends.
- Teenagers might spend their weekend time shopping, going to the cinema or hanging out with friends.

We recommend that you get involved in these activities as a great way to get to know your homestay family and develop your English language skills.

You will be advised of any pets at your homestay before you arrive in Australia. If you have any concerns or pet allergies, please let BROWNS know as soon as possible.

Before You Arrive

Booking your flight to Australia

Your parents or education agent will be required to inform BROWNS of your arrival details in Australia. Providing the Flight Details will help BROWNS prepare for your arrival.

Contact your homestay family

We suggest you contact your host family before arriving in Australia. Find out a little about them. What is their weekly schedule? What kinds of food do they eat? What are their hobbies and interests?

Pick up and drop off

BROWNS is responsible for collecting Under 18 homestay students from the airport and dropping them back at the end of their stay. Over 18s may make their own way to and from the residency.

Arriving At Your Homestay

It's an exciting moment to arrive at your homestay! After a long journey, at last you will see your homestay and meet your homestay family members.

When you first arrive at your homestay you will be introduced to your homestay family and shown around your new home.

Tips for a positive arrival

We hope you feel excited and happy when you arrive at your homestay. At the same time, it's normal to feel tired after your long journey and you may feel overwhelmed or even a bit homesick.

Here are some tips we recommend in the first hours after you arrive:

- Get in touch with your family back home. Say hi and let them know you have safely arrived.
- Eat something (your homestay family will have a meal or some snacks ready for you when you arrive).
- Have a shower and change into some clean clothes.
- Have a rest – a nap or a lie down.

Getting To Know Your Homestay Family

Language and cultural differences

Understanding, speaking and writing in English can take some time. The only way to learn is to give it a go! To help you along we have a couple of suggestions:

- Don't overcomplicate things: it's fine to use simple language and short sentences.
- Have a go: don't be afraid to communicate, even when you're not sure of the best word.
- Download translation apps: technology is your friend! Download a translation app such as Google Translate to help you when things get tricky.
- Start to get to know your homestay family and tell them a bit about yourself.
- Your homestay family might offer to take you on a tour of the local area, which is a good thing to do on your first day.
- Even though you might be tired, try not to just stay in your bedroom. Getting to know your homestay family will be easier if you make the effort to spend time together.

Homestay Life

Here are a few general guidelines about life in an Australian home, to help you feel comfortable and ensure everyone has a positive experience during your homestay.

Drinking water

Australian tap water is completely safe to drink. Filtered or bottled drinking water is not necessary in Australia.

Food

Australian cuisine varies greatly. It is very likely that every household will have a different menu and eat different types of food during the week.

Here are some of the meals and foods that a typical Australian family might eat:

- Breakfast: toast, cereal, muesli, yoghurt
- Morning tea: fruit, muesli bar, yoghurt, cheese and crackers
- Lunch: sandwich and a piece of fruit, or food such as meat and vegetables that can be heated in the microwave at school.
- Afternoon tea: fruit, muesli bar, instant noodles, veggie sticks, cheese and crackers
- Dinner: rice or pasta with meat and vegetables
- Supper: warm drink (e.g. tea, hot chocolate), slice of cake, biscuits.

There may be differences between the food you have grown up with and the food available at your homestay.

Always let your homestay family know if you have any dietary requirements or allergies.

In many Australian families, it is normal for families to make extra for dinner so that students can take some for lunch the next day. We call this “leftovers”. Your School will have a microwave so that you can heat your lunch.

Utensils and cutlery

Common Australian eating utensils and cutlery may not be the same as in your home country. The majority of Australians eat with a knife, fork and spoon. You are always able to purchase your own eating utensils or give ours a go!

Household appliances

Don't be afraid to ask how to use household appliances. Everything from the washing machine to the kettle might operate a little differently from what you are used to. It is a great idea to double check with your homestay family before you start using any household appliance.

Bed linen

At a minimum your homestay family will provide you with:

- pillow and pillowcase
- bottom and top sheets
- quilt (also called a doona) and quilt cover.

Australia can be cold during the winter, so ask your homestay family for extra blankets if you don't feel warm.

If you do not feel comfortable discussing this with your homestay family you can get in touch with BROWNS.

Household cleanliness

In most homestay families there will be an expectation that everyone will help with household chores. This includes keeping the house clean and tidy. You may be asked to help set the table before meals, wash the dishes or load the dishwasher and keep your personal spaces tidy. Australian families rarely have staff to help with cooking or cleaning at home.

Bathroom etiquette

Water is regarded as a scarce resource in Australia, with many households taking extra measures not to waste water. Please be mindful of this when using the bathroom facilities. Consider the following to be best practice.

- Avoid showers longer than 5 minutes. A 2 minute shower is best.
- Don't leave water running while you brush your teeth.
- Always turn off taps properly.
- Only flush toilet paper down the toilet. Any other items will block the toilet.
- Never squat on a western toilet: it may break and you could injure yourself.

Laundry

It is a good idea to discuss laundry with your homestay family. In some families, the parents do most of the laundry but in others, children (especially teenagers) help with this responsibility, including putting clothes in the washing machine, hanging clothes on the line and bringing them in once they are dry. In Australian households, because the weather is so nice, often families hang their washing on a line outside to dry instead of using an electric clothes dryer. Your homestay family will show you how this works.

If you are more comfortable doing some, or all your own laundry, this is fine, but check with your host before using any appliance in the house.

House rules

Each homestay will have a unique set of expectations, which will be provided to you in greater detail by your host. It is very important to follow these rules so that everyone can live together harmoniously. Remember you are guest in someone's home. Your homestay's house rules might include:

- Polite and respectful behaviour
- cleaning/chores
- use of common facilities (e.g. bathroom, kitchen, laundry)
- curfews
- approval of any overnight stays (away from your homestay)
- going out with friends

- guests – if and how long they can visit

Personal Safety and Communication

Always keep your homestay family informed of your schedule and whereabouts.

It is important to let your homestay family know if you won't make it home on time and if you are under 18 years of age to inform your hosts if you won't be home for a meal or will be home late.

If you ever get lost while you are out, or feel unsafe, contact your homestay family or BROWNS straight away.

If you have any concerns regarding your experience at your homestay, let BROWNS know as soon as possible.

Overnight stays

If you would like to spend the night away from your homestay, for example with a friend's family and you are under 18 years of age, you must obtain permission from your homestay family. They are responsible for your welfare so please ensure you respect their decisions.

Communication

It is important that everyone feels comfortable at home. Your hosts will treat you like another family member, so it is important you follow their rules and have open conversations if there is anything you are uncomfortable with. The host family will do everything they can to make you feel welcome and in return you can tell them all about your family life back home. If you ever need any help, BROWNS friendly staff are always there to assist. Our advice is to speak up early in your stay.

We hope this kit has answered some of your questions about what your Australian homestay experience will be like.

We are excited you have chosen to study with us and can't wait to welcome you to BROWNS.

We are looking forward to having you stay.

See you soon!

Health and Safety Appendix

1. If you find yourself in danger at any point during your stay you must first call emergency services.

You will need to let BROWNS know as soon as you can by contacting BROWNS emergency number:

Queensland – Brisbane and Gold Coast

Emergency Phone - Ph: +61 (0) 411 209 002

Victoria – Melbourne

Emergency Phone - Ph: +61 (0) 411 209 002

2. BROWNS will ensure your host family is aware of the situation and will contact your nominated emergency contact.

BROWNS staff will follow their Critical Incidence Process.

What you should do in an emergency

For all emergencies, life-threatening situations or serious injuries:

Dial: 000

Dial: 112 (from mobile, even if you have no signal or network connection)

Dial: 106 (from TDD text phones. Do not text or SMS the number – you must dial the number)

What happens when you dial 000

The 000 operator will ask if you need police, fire or ambulance. You must say which of these services you need.

You can also ask for an interpreter. The operator will ask you when language you need. Tell them the name of your language in English.

You will then be connected to either the police, fire or ambulance service.

The operator will ask you a range of questions in order to help you. For example, what your situation is, your phone number and your location.

You will need to stay calm to tell the operator where you are so the services can come and help you. Make sure you give them the exact address or location. If you are close to a street corner, make sure you tell the operator the streets at the closest intersection if you know them.

Do not hang up the phone until the operator tells you to do so. In most instances, the

operator will stay on the line to give you instructions and help you.

Hospital emergency departments

To go to a hospital emergency department, you need to either:

Call 000 in an emergency to be taken in an ambulance

Ask your homestay parent to take you. This is because not all hospitals have an emergency department. BROWNS or homestay parent will be able to take you to the right hospital.

Staff at emergency departments are trained and will speak with you to assess your situation. You may be required to wait until other patients are seen first.

Remember to take your Overseas Student Healthcare Cover (OSHC) card with you.

Other emergency services

Poisons information centre

Dial: 13 11 26

The poisons information centre help line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the helpline if you or someone near you has been poisoned, has overdosed, has made a mistake with medicines. You should also call the helpline for help if someone has been bitten or stung by marine animals (such as jellyfish), snakes, spiders or insects (such as bees or wasps).

Mental health emergencies

Dial: 131 114

The [Lifeline](#) mental health phone help line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you or someone you know needs mental health support, lifeline will provide you with someone who will listen and give you help at any time.

Non-urgent services

Call BROWNS or homestay parent

BROWNS is available 24 hours, 7 days a week to help you when you need them. We can help you if you have homestay issues, health or medical concerns, you feel unhappy or unsafe. It is our job to help you so don't feel that you can't ask for their help.

It's important to contact your Homestay family even if you are lost or you have caught the wrong bus. This way we can help get you get home safely.

Nurse-on-Call phone service

Dial: 1300 606 024

Nurse-On-Call puts you directly in touch with a registered nurse for caring, professional health advice around the clock. You can contact Nurse-on-Call if:

- you or a friend or family member is feeling unwell

- you are not sure if you should seek medical help
- you're away from home or situated a long way from medical help
- you simply want advice or information about health services in your area.

Sometimes if you call Nurse-on-Call, the nurse may tell you to go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Your local doctor or GP

Dial: Your local doctor

You can also contact your local doctor or General Practitioner (GP). If your doctor is closed, they will most likely have the number of an after hour medical clinic on their phone answering service.

Your OSHC healthcare cover will also have a list of approved after-hours doctors who can visit you at home.

Your local pharmacy

Dial: Your local pharmacy

You can also contact your local pharmacy or chemist. Some pharmacies are open 24 hours a day and most are open until about 7pm or 9pm at night. The pharmacist will be able to help you with many health concerns.