



HOMESTAY POLICY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 St Catherine's School acknowledges its obligations to meet the provisions of Federal and State legislation; in particular the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018), the VRQA Guidelines for Enrolment of Overseas Students aged under 18 years, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic), the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and the Victorian Child Safe Standards. We are also subject to the anti-discrimination legislation administered by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission at Commonwealth level.
- 1.2 Overseas students enrolled at St Catherine's may either:
 - a. Live in Australia with a parent, a DHA approved relative or a legal custodian;
 - b. Live in the Illawarra Boarding House; or
 - c. Live in Australia under a Homestay accommodation arrangement approved by St Catherine's School.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (National Code 2018) is a set of nationally consistent standards that governs the protection of International students. This Policy applies to welfare arrangements in situations where students are not living with their parents, or who do not have parents living in Australia. This policy is applicable to the School, Homestay students, Homestay Hosts, Homestay Service Providers, Local Contacts and any third party related to the accommodation and welfare of the student.
- 2.2 The School will not delegate, outsource or contract out the responsibility for approving the accommodation and providing support and general welfare arrangements for a student who is under the age of 18. As a condition of the student visa, students under 18 years of age are required to have suitable accommodation and welfare arrangements, which must be approved by the School.
- 2.3 All children regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse. St Catherine's School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to providing a safe environment for children with a disability.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **[Child]:** [for the purposes of this policy a child is defined as 18 years and under]
- 3.2 **[Homestay]:** residential accommodation provided to domestic or international school students by local families, either on a paid or voluntary basis.



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3.3 [DHA Approved Relative]:

- a. a parent, spouse, de facto partner, brother, sister, step-parent, step-brother, step-sister, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew, or a step-grandparent, step-aunt, step-uncle, step-niece or step-nephew;
- b. nominated by a parent of the applicant or a person who has custody of the applicant;
- c. aged at least 21 and of good character, an Australian citizen, permanent resident or be eligible to remain in Australia until the overseas student's visa expires or the overseas student turns 18 years of age (whichever happens first).

3.4 [CRICOS]: Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students

3.5 [Third Party Homestay Service Provider]: organises the provision of suitable homestay arrangements.

3.6 [Homestay Provider(Host)]: provides accommodation and support for an agreed-upon period of time

3.7 [VRQA]: Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

3.8 [PRISMS]: Provider Registration and International Student Management System

3.9 [CAAW letter]: 'Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare' letter issued where the Principal has undertaken responsibility, under the Migration Regulations, for approving accommodation, support and welfare arrangements for a student who has not turned 18 (who will not be residing with a parent or DHA approved relative in Australia).

4. Policy Statement

4.1 St Catherine's School recognises that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report identified specific groups of students being at heightened risk, including International Students and those in Out of Home Care. Consistent with the requirements of the National Code 2018, VRQA Guidelines, and their intersection with the Child Safe Standards, the School is committed to mitigating risk for all students, with specific policy addressing the needs of these students.

4.2 St Catherine's School is committed to being a Child Safe organisation and has embedded child safe practices in Homestay selection and monitoring processes to mitigate against risks associated with Out of Home Care and cultural and linguistically diverse students.

4.3 St Catherine's School must be satisfied that the student is at least 13 years of age before entering into an agreement or arrangement for the provision of homestay accommodation to an overseas student, or issuing a CAAW letter to the DHA in circumstances where homestay accommodation will be provided.

Third Party Homestay Services Providers:

4.4 St Catherine's School currently engages CETA Homestay Services Provider and Australian Homestay Network (AHN) to source homestay accommodation options but the School does not delegate, outsource or contract out the responsibility for approving



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the accommodation and providing support and general welfare arrangements for a student who is under the age of 18.

- 4.5 Stringent selection, approval and monitoring processes apply, as outlined in the Homestay Approval and Monitoring Form, the Homestay Responsibility Agreement, the Engagement of Third Party Provider Guidelines and the Selection Criteria noted in this Policy.
- 4.6 Third Party Homestay Service Providers are subject to Child Safety screening and the following selection criteria by checking the website, meeting with staff and requesting and verifying appropriate documentation:
- a. awareness of the VRQA Minimum Standard Guidelines, the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas students 2018 and the Victorian Child Safety Standards
 - b. adherence to Commonwealth and State legislation (eg. the Commonwealth's Privacy Act of 1988, Education Services for Overseas Students Act of 2000) professional oversight of homestay accommodation selection process
 - c. diligent selection, induction/monitoring processes and protocols which align with current Child Protection legislation
 - d. all staff have current Working with Children checks, which will be verified upon receipt and every six months using the Working With Children Check Victoria online verification tool
 - e. conduct training including reading the School's Child Safety Policy and signing the Child Safety Code of Conduct
 - f. commitment to appropriate student placement according to their age and requirements
 - g. positive referrals from other education providers
 - h. appropriate complaint resolution processes
 - i. 24 hour student support access

4.7 The School will:

- a. organise homestay accommodation, with the approval of the Principal, on a case by case basis
- b. not delegate, outsource or contract out the responsibility of approving the accommodation and providing support and general welfare arrangements for a student who is under the age of 18
- c. ensure that all persons in care or supervision of an overseas student; and where applicable, students of 18 years or over, understand their role and responsibility in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in accordance with the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic), through an induction by the Deputy Principal: Student Wellbeing
- d. verify the suitability of homestay accommodation according to the Homestay Approval and Monitoring Policy and checklist during a site visit (unless the



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particular homestay has been verified by a site visit in relation to another student in the previous three months)

- e. provide the student with an *International Homestay Student Safety Card* which includes the homestay provider's address and contact details, 24 hour school contacts, emergency contacts, the Ombudsman and the VRQA's website and contact details and a statement that St Catherine's School is regulated by the VRQA
- f. interview the student once per term to monitor student welfare
- g. ensure that the homestay provider is given appropriate information regarding their responsibilities and that the Homestay Responsibility Agreement is signed
- h. provide the Homestay host with emergency contact details for both the School and the parents of the student
- i. inform the Department of Home Affairs of Accommodation Arrangements via PRISMS
- j. provide information and advice to students, parents and homestay providers
- k. monitor school attendance/academic progress
- l. implement the School's Critical Incident policy if, after a reasonable period, the student has gone missing from the approved accommodation and cannot be contacted, including contacting the student's parent and the police. If the student cannot be located, the School will report the student's breach of visa condition 8532 to DIBP by submitting the 'Non-Approval of Appropriate Accommodation/Welfare Arrangements' letter.

4.8 Homestay Providers:

4.8.1 The School will ensure appropriate processes for recruiting and screening **homestay hosts and any residents over the age of 18 in the home**, which will include:

- a. Obtaining, recording and regularly verifying the Working With Children's Checks for all members of the household over the age of 18 using the *Working with Children Checks Victoria* online validation tool on receipt (and at least twice annually)
- b. Referee check for suitability for child connected work
- c. Check personal identification (eg Driver's licence)
- d. ensuring that all household members aged over 18 undergo an induction to make them aware of the Child Safety Policy, which includes an explanation of criminal offences, Reportable Conduct and reporting processes and procedures in the event that a reasonable belief has been formed that a child has been or is in danger of being abused



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- e. reading the Child Safety Code of Conduct, prior to the homestay commencing and annually thereafter and having each member of the household over age 18 sign that they agree to abide by it
- f. conduct annual training for all homestay providers including reading the School's Child Safety Policy and signing the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- g. obtaining and recording that all members of the household over the age of 18 have submitted a Certificate of Completion for the Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting eModule annually
- h. a site visit and inspection prior to the commencement of the homestay and every six months thereafter
- i. verifying that the homestay accommodation provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment, including a separate bedroom and facilities appropriate to the needs and age of the student such as a study desk, adequate lighting, heating etc.
- j. ensuring that the homestay accommodation will be provided by a suitable family, couple or single person. The homestay host must be at least 25 years of age
- k. monitoring and documenting homestay arrangements on the Homestay Approval and Monitoring Form, including twice yearly visits to verify that the accommodation continues to meet all requirements

4.9 Third Party Homestay Service Provider

- 4.9.1 The School will ensure appropriate processes for recruiting and screening a Third Party Homestay Service Provider, which will include:
 - a. ensuring that any service provision meets the Child Safe Standards, including obtaining, checking and filing the Third Party Homestay Service Provider's Processes and Procedures documentation
 - b. ensuring that any adults involved in providing accommodation and welfare arrangements to the student (including the area co-ordinator) hold a Working with Children Check, consistent with Standard 5.3.2 of the National Code
 - c. obtaining, recording and regularly verifying the third party Third Party Homestay Service Provider Area Co-ordinator's Working With Children's Check using the *Working with Children Checks Victoria* online validation tool on receipt (and at least twice annually)
 - d. ensuring that all staff who will be in contact with the homestay student receive the School's Child Safety Policy which includes an explanation regarding criminal offences and reporting processes and procedures in the event that a reasonable belief has been formed that a child has been or is in danger of being abused.



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4.10 Local Contact

4.10.1 Where the student is not residing with their parents, a local contact must be nominated in the Enrolment Contract. The local contact is not responsible for the student's welfare however will act, as necessary, as a contact between the School and parents should assistance with translation be required. The Local Contact will be subject to Child Safe screening by St Catherine's School and meet the following criteria:

- a. be over 25 years of age
- b. have an adequate grasp of written and spoken English
- c. be a Permanent Resident of Australia and live in the Melbourne metropolitan area and be easily contactable by telephone. If the Local Contact is away for an extended period of time, a replacement must be nominated and the School notified of this change.
- d. The Local Contact will be subject to Child Safety screening
- e. obtain a *Working with Children Check* which will be recorded and regularly verified (at least twice annually) using the *Working With Children Check Victoria* online validation tool
- f. present personal identification (eg Driver's licence)
- g. supply details of a personal referee who will be contacted to attest to the person's good character and suitability for child connected work
- h. agree to and sign the St Catherine's School Child Safety Code of Conduct

4.11 The Principal will:

- a. approve the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for unaccompanied international students aged over 13 years and under 18 years of age
- b. ensure that School arranged homestay accommodation for international students must meet the minimum standards in the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* and the *VRQA Guidelines for Enrolment of International Students Aged Under 18*
- c. meet the school's obligations under Ministerial Order No. 870 - Child Safe Standards –Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
- d. require the student, parent, primary contact, homestay provider and the Third Party Homestay Service Provider to sign a *Homestay Responsibility Agreement* on commencement of the student's enrolment. This will outline the house rules and homestay requirements.
- e. ensure that, to prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest, a teacher or an employee of the school cannot act as a homestay provider



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- f. manage dispute resolution relating to homestay (Complaints that cannot be resolved by the school will be submitted in writing to the VRQA)
- g. liaise with the VRQA regarding complex or significant international student management matters (eg critical incidents)

4.12 The Homestay Provider will:

- a. abide by the School and third party Homestay Services Provider's Agreements
- b. supply current Working With Children Checks for all adults residing or frequently residing in homestay arrangements, prior to the student moving into the residence and be maintained throughout their stay or until they turn 18 years of age
- c. advise the School and provide Working With Children Checks prior to any additional adults commencing residence at the location
- d. ensure that the maximum number of international students per homestay is three at all times
- e. sign a *Homestay Responsibility Agreement* which outlines the expectations of providing a caring, nurturing and supportive environment for International Students which includes the following:
 - I. clean facilities including a separate bedroom and bed
 - II. study facilities, including a desk, study light and bookcase
 - III. wardrobe
 - IV. towels and linen
 - V. gas, electricity and heating
 - VI. use of bathroom and laundry facilities
 - VII. entry into the home like any other member of the family (e.g. house key, alarm code)
 - VIII. arrangement to access internet to support their study and communication with student's home
 - IX. use of living areas within residence
 - X. setting and enforcing reasonable house rules/ expectations for the student including curfew and internet time
 - XI. assisting the student to develop and practice their English language
 - XII. assisting the student (in conjunction with the school if appropriate) in seeking co-curricular activities and sports
 - XIII. Homestay hosts must provide services at all times during holiday breaks if students have not returned to their home country, to ensure a consistent and safe living environment for students.

4.13 The student will:

- a. abide by the School and Homestay Services Provider's Agreements, including Homestay Rules and Expectations



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- b. provide written permission from their parents to the Primary contact if they wish to stay away from their homestay overnight. The Primary contact will then inform the School and the third party Homestay Services Provider
- c. the School must also hold relevant contact details prior to the student being allowed to stay away
- d. accept responsibility for phone and internet expenses unless otherwise agreed on the Homestay Responsibility Agreement
- e. display respect for the Homestay family members and their home at all times
- f. display respect for any Homestay Rules considered necessary for the smooth functioning of the specific family Homestay routines
- g. communicate openly and honestly at all times with Homestay parents and be willing to ask questions when unsure of any matters of concern
- h. return to their Homestay Residence no later than 6.00pm on Monday to Thursday, 9:30pm on Friday and Saturday or 6.00pm Sunday evenings (Short Term Homestay arrangements may be more flexible if agreed upon due to the school holidays)
- i. not have visitors to the homestay accommodation
- j. provide the School, the local contact, the homestay host and where applicable, the Homestay Services Provider, a minimum of four weeks' notice if they wish to return home for the School Holidays
- k. not engage private tutors unless arranged with the School and conducted in the Boarding House in accordance with the Child Safety screening regulations
- l. must request permission and receive School approval to attend any off-site educational facilities

4.14 Breach of Homestay Rules

- a. A student will be asked to leave the homestay immediately if it is found, that after reasonable discussion to resolve concerns between the homestay host and student, and 3 warnings have been given by the homestay host/local contact, that the student has not followed rules for safety and acceptable behaviour in the home (as per School Behavioural Expectations).

4.15 Fees

- 4.16.1 If a third party Homestay Services Provider is engaged, all fees will be paid to the approved third party as per their contract.

4.16 Changes to the agreement

- a. Where a student moves out of a homestay, at least four weeks' notice must be given to the homestay provider, the third party Homestay Services Provider and School. Giving less notice than this may result in the bond being forfeited.



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- b. Students and homestay providers may not change the homestay arrangements without consultation with the School and through the Homestay Responsibility Agreement.

4.17 Emergency situations

- a. In exceptional situations, where a school needs to urgently relocate a student, a Principal may approve a temporary placement with a school employee who is not a registered teacher. This should only be agreed to on an interim basis until appropriate ongoing homestay accommodation is arranged, and where any financial relationship between the student and the school employee is avoided. A registered teacher's obligations under the Codes and the law are ongoing, and therefore it is not appropriate for a registered teacher to provide homestay accommodation, even in emergency situations.

4.18 Over 18 Students

- a. It is a condition of enrolment at St Catherine's School that all international students must reside in school approved accommodation (including students who are over 18) until the end date of the CAAW or until the end of the study period
- b. It is a condition of enrolment at St Catherine's School that students over 18 are not allowed to drive while residing in Homestay.

4.19 Short Term Homestay:

- a. As the St Catherine's Boarding House closes during school holiday periods, it may be necessary to put in place Short Term Homestay Accommodation for some boarders if they are not in the care of their parent.
- b. Short Term Homestay regulations require that:
 - I. all members of the household aged over 18 hold a Working with Children Check which will be verified using the *Working with Children Victoria* online validation tool;
 - II. a referee check for suitability for child connected work is undertaken by the School
 - III. personal identification is checked against the WWCC details (eg Driver's licence)
 - IV. a home visit has been undertaken by the school to ensure the accommodation is 'appropriate to the student's age and needs' and that a separate bedroom has been provided
 - V. the *Homestay Responsibility Agreement* is signed;
 - VI. all household members aged over 18 are made aware of the Child Safety Policy, reporting procedures and sign and agree to the Child Safety Code of Conduct;



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5. Responsibility

- 5.1 Administration of this Policy applies to the Principal, Deputy Principal: Student Wellbeing and Admissions Office.

6. Compliance requirements

- a. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2006
- b. Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)
- c. National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018)
- d. Department of Home Affairs Student Visa requirements
www.border.gov.au/Trav/Stud/school-sector-students Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- e. Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015 (Vic)
- f. Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic)
- g. VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students under the age of 18 years

7. Associated Documents

- a. St Catherine's School Child Safe Code of Conduct
- b. St Catherine's School Child Safe Policy
- c. St Catherine's School Child Safe Strategy
- d. Homestay Responsibility Agreement
- e. Homestay Approval and Monitoring Policy
- f. Enrolment Contract – Non Residential
- g. St Catherine's International Student and EAL Policy
- h. St Catherine's Student Accommodation Policy
- i. Welfare Policy: Full Fee Paying Overseas Students
- j. St Catherine's School Enrolment Policy
- k. St Catherine's School Community Code of Conduct Policy
- l. St Catherine's School Overseas Students Business Practices
- m. St Catherine's School Grievance Policy
- n. Third Party Services Procedures manual
- o. Relevant Third Party Homestay Services Provider documentation/agreements
- p. Homestay Checklist