



Melbourne Girls' College

International Student Program – Homestay Policy

The below content reflects Departmental guidelines for homestay as a starting point, however each accredited school can further specify individual homestay policy preferences within this document. This document should align with a school's homestay responsibility agreement.

Rationale: Where parents opt for DET to arrange accommodation, the Department through the school, is responsible for provision of accommodation, support and general welfare to the student. These arrangements shall be in place for the period that the student will be under 18 years of age while in Australia. This policy has been developed to meet the requirements of the ESOS National Code 2007 and Student visa (Condition 8532) which require that appropriate arrangements have been made for the accommodation, welfare and support of students less than 18 years of age.

This policy is designed to be consistent with the IED guidelines. It is a Quality Standards requirement that all schools have a homestay policy in place.

The Victorian Department of Education and Training International Education Division has authority over this program and provide the following advice and support to schools relating to home stay accommodations, support and general welfare responsibilities:

- These students should be treated the same as all other students attending the school.
- Homestay families should be provided with a copy of the school's child safety policy/ statement of commitment. The Standards apply to homestays because they are part of the school environment (physical place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours).
- Homestay families should be required to comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- The school should ensure appropriate checks are done on home stay families as required by Standard 5 of the International Student Program Quality Standards, which adhere to the Education Services for Overseas Student Legislation Framework.
- Homestay families should be provided with a copy of the four critical situations in the case of which a report should be made to the DHS Child Protection via the school
- The school should include home stay families in risk management strategy

For more information about the Child Safe Standards, see:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/protect/Pages/childsafestandards.aspx>

Homestay Policy and Requirements

Schools and Homestay Providers and Third Parties

Welfare

- The School will organise homestay accommodation of high quality and which provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment.
- The homestay accommodation will be provided by a host which may be a suitable family, couple or single person.
- The obligations and expectations of the homestay provider and the student, including the need for ensuring that the homestay family has in place appropriate insurance coverage (home and content insurance) which recognises that the international student is residing within the homestay premises (covering but not limited to house and contents, personal belongings, damage to property and legal liability coverage).
- Working with Children Checks will be completed and reviewed by the school for all adults residing or frequently residing in the homestay prior to the student moving in.
- The maximum number of international students per homestay is 3, regardless of provider and the family.
- Students must provide written permission from their parents to the school and have the school's endorsement if they wish to stay away from their homestay overnight (MGC ISP Overnight stay_travel permission form). The school also must hold relevant contact details and inform the homestay of the arrangement prior to the student being allowed to stay away.
- The homestay will comply to the school Child Safe Policy for homestays
- The School will monitor progress of homestay arrangements, including twice yearly visits.

Other Policy Requirements:

Fees and Services

- A weekly fee of between \$315 and \$350 will be charged. This covers expenses associated with the provision of the following homestay services:
 - Single bedroom for the student's exclusive use
 - Three meals per day, seven days per week (cooked evening meal)
 - Facilities including a bed, wardrobe, towels and linen
 - Gas, electricity, heating and water costs
 - Cleaning services of common living areas
 - Use of living areas within residence
 - Study facilities, including a desk, study light and bookcase
- Students may not be used to eating a western diet and homestay parents should be aware of any food a student cannot eat due to religious beliefs. Some students are also accustomed to eating a small snack when they come home from school.
- Students may initially need assistance with making medical and dental appointments. If a student is ill and is not able to attend school the host parent will be required to notify the school.
- Privacy is important and personal possessions and personal space of students should be respected.
- Host families may initially have to explain directions to the school or English Language Centre as well as explain procedures for buying and using a myki card and the location of train, tram and bus stops and timetables.
- Cash payments are not acceptable. All homestay payments will be via direct debit into the homestay's bank account.
- Telephone and internet expenses will be the student's responsibility unless otherwise agreed on the Homestay Responsibility Agreement. Internet expenses are included in the homestay fee.
- The initial payment will include two / four weeks' fees in advance.

- During holidays a holding fee to secure the homestay accommodation fee may be required to cover the student's absence. This is to be negotiated between the homestay, student and school and may not be over 50% of the total homestay fee.
- Students and/ or parents are required to reimburse homestay providers for any damage to property caused by student, or costs incurred by student during the time of residence
- Complaints that cannot be resolved by either the homestay provider or the student should be referred in writing to the School.

Homestay Arrangements

- Provide a safe, clean, comfortable and welcoming home for the student
- Explain how to use public transport and show the student to get to school, city, VSL.
- Introduce the student to the local area including shops, sporting facilities, library
- Make student aware of safety precautions when travelling particularly after dark.
- Provide 3 wholesome meals per day and eat dinner together as a family
- If the student is absent from school, ensure ISC knows before 9pm the day of the absence and provide a note the next day
- Contact ISC if I will be away overnight or longer and arrange for another "host "with WWCC
- Not allow the student to stay away overnight without permission from parent/ISC
- Help the student make appropriate appointments with reputable medical practitioners and ensure the student can safely travel to and from the appointment.
- Respect the privacy of the students
- Make all reasonable efforts to engage the student in English in meaningful exchanges about your respective families, backgrounds, traditions and cultures.
- If the bond is applied, it should be refundable at the conclusion of the homestay period after all expenses, repairs or damage (if any) have been paid. Students and/or their parents are required to reimburse homestay providers for any damage to property (if any) during the student's time of residence.
- If a homestay provider wishes to terminate the homestay agreement, at least two weeks' notice is given to the student and School. Any advance payments should be refunded to the student.
- Where a student moves out of a homestay at least two weeks' notice must be given to the homestay provider and School. If a student wishes to move within two weeks of giving notice, two weeks' homestay fees will still be payable to the homestay.
- Students, students' parents, homestay providers and the International Student Coordinator will be asked to sign a Homestay Responsibility Agreement on commencement of the student's enrolment. This will outline the house rules and requirements as well as homestay costs and methods of payment.
- Students and homestay providers cannot change the homestay arrangements without consultation with the school and through the Homestay Responsibility Agreement.
- Comply with the Melbourne Girls' College Child Safety Policy and notify the ISC of any concerns you have about the student's well-being, health or happiness.

Over 18 Students

- It is a condition of enrolment at Melbourne Girls' College that all international students must reside in homestay accommodation (including students who are over 18)

MGC SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORT FACT SHEET

Protecting Children/International students from Abuse for Homestay Parents

Children have the right to be safe and protected at school, at home and in the community. As adults we play a critical role in protecting them from all forms of abuse.

As a homestay parent, you have the responsibility for protecting and caring for homestay students. You also play a critical role in identifying and responding to suspected abuse within the community. In fact, it may amount to a criminal offence if you fail to report suspected child sexual abuse.

What is a child abuse?

Child abuse means actions that hurt a child or teenager. Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional or psychological harm, neglect or family violence.

What are the signs that a child has been abused?

There are a range of physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse.

- A change in a child's behavior e.g. withdrawal, regressive behavior
- Physical indicators of abuse, e.g. unexplained bruise
- An inappropriate relationship between an adult and a child, e.g. unexplained gifts or phone/email contacts.

Reporting Abuse (Please also refer to Melbourne Girls' College Critical Actions for Homestay Families)

What should I do if I suspect that *my homestay student* has been abused?

If you believe the homestay student has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, contact Victoria Police immediately via the local police station or on 000 if it's an emergency.

What should I do if I suspect that *another child* has been abused?

If you suspect the student's friend has been abused or is at risk of abuse (such as physical abuse) you should report immediately to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Child Protection (see contact details at the end of this fact sheet).

- If you suspect a child has been sexually abused, you must also report your concerns to the Victoria Police. You may be committing a criminal offence if you fail to do so.
- You should report even if you're not sure. It is the role of authorities to investigate your concerns and determine if any further action needs to be taken.

What should I do if I have new grounds that the homestay student/child is being abused?

- You should report to DHHD Child Protection or Victoria Police if you have new grounds for believing that a child/homestay student is being abused, even though they have previously investigated and dismissed your report.
- Every report is critical as it builds evidence and helps authorities gain a clearer understanding of risks to the student.



What happens if someone at Melbourne Girls' College suspects that my homestay student has been abused?

All staff members at Melbourne Girls' College are required to report suspected child abuse to DHHS, Child Protection and, in some circumstances, to Victoria Police. The school will contact you as soon as possible, unless they have been advised not to do so by authorities. Where appropriate the school will work with you to ensure the student is provided with support, which may include referring them to wellbeing professionals.

HELP TO KEEP HOMESTAY STUDENTS SAFE

Where appropriate have a chat to homestay student/students and make sure that they know that no one is allowed to threaten, hurt or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Melbourne Girls' College will also be supporting international students in learning about their rights to be safe and respected. If you have any concerns about the student talk to the principal or another staff member at the school about your concerns. You can also raise this matter with DHHS Child Protection and the Victoria Police. Please visit www.education.vic.gov.au/protect for more information.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Victoria Police (24-hour services)	000
Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection (24-hour services)	131 278
Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Northern and Western Suburban (LGAs)	Local Government Areas (LGAs) Brimbank, Hobson Bays, Maribyrnong, Melbourne 1300 664 977
Department of Education and Training South Western Victoria	General enquiries: 1300 333 232 Footscray office: (03) 8397 0300
Melbourne Girls' College (MGC)	General office: (03) 9428 8955
Principal	Karen Money: 0419 549 691 karen.money@mgc.vic.edu.au
Assistant Principal	Andrew Arney: 0407 256 083 andrew.arney@mgc.vic.edu.au
MGC International Student Program International Student Coordinator ISC (English and Chinese speaking)	Jielei Cui: 0407 019 896 0450 857 983 Jielei.cui@mgc.vic.edu.au

Melbourne Girls' College Critical Actions for Homestay Families

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

YOU SHOULD TAKE ACTION:

As a homestay parent, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care.

You **should** act, by following the critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or at risk of being abused.

You **should** act if you form a suspicion and or reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse)

ACTION 1. RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid if you can
- call 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- identifying a contact person at the school for future liaison with Police

Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.

ACTION 2. REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES

You should report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible.

Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

VICTORIA POLICE: If you believe a child has been abused, or is at risk of being abused, contact local police station or on 000 if it's an emergency. You **must** report all instances of suspected sexual abuse (including grooming) to Victoria Police.

GOVERNMENT SCHOOL - MELBOURNE GIRLS' COLLEGE (MGC): You **should also** report the suspected abuse to the **School Principal** at Melbourne Girls' College on **(03) 9428 8955** and/or to leadership team of the child's house

Principal Team

Karen Money: 0419 549 691

karen.money@mgc.vic.edu.au

Andrew Arney: 0407 256 083

andrew.arney@mgc.vic.edu.au

ACTION 3. CONTACTING PARENTS

The school principal is responsible and must consult with DHHS Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents.

ACTION 4. PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Melbourne Girls' College must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan or Safety Plan, referral to wellbeing professionals, etc. MGC will work with you to ensure your homestay student is provided with appropriate support. You **must** follow the Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities.

*If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold **significant concerns** for their wellbeing you should still act.*

This may include seeking advice from the school or Victoria police