# Information for Prospective Homestay Hosts

## Video Script

### Slide 1: Introduction

Hello everyone, and welcome to this video from the Victorian Department of Education and Training for those of you who are thinking you might want to be a homestay host. The aim of this video is to let you know what it involves and what you might expect.

### Slide 2: Rewards of being a homestay host

The fact that you are here now suggests that you already have some idea about the rewards of hosting international students. The things you do together and all your experiences—the day-to-day living as well as the special days—can be a lot of fun and deeply gratifying. Some of the really joyful highlights happen when you are together for special dinners and festive occasions.

It’s a chance to have a young person in your home like a new family member, with all the fun and growth that brings. You can share your hospitality, love and care. There is also the rewarding cultural exchange and that works both ways.

The success of the program is founded on the success of the relationships: based on mutual respect, trust and communication. Warmth, consideration and caring for each other will forge relationships that may last a lifetime.

### Slide 3 Rewards of being a homestay host cont.

Another benefit of being a homestay host is that you are paid.

The fees will come to you electronically, not in cash. The school will keep and monitor the student’s bond until the end of their stay. The International Student Coordinator at your school is your contact for your fees, so you’d talk to them about any money issues, not to the student.

### Slide 4: International students are vulnerable

There are some laws and regulations around homestays that protect both you and the student.

Some of the students are as young as 13, and often English is not their first language. They come alone without their parents and can be very vulnerable. The laws ensure that the ways in which students are hosted are consistent, fair and transparent. So everyone knows what to expect and how to care for them.

### Slide 5: International Student Coordinator (ISC)

You would not be doing this alone. The school has a representative, a specific person designated to support you. This is the International Student Coordinator, or ISC: your Number 1 support person. Some schools have a designated Homestay Coordinator as well. If you had any concerns or issues, this International Student Coordinator—your ISC—is there for you, and they would know what to do. In an emergency, the ISC can be contacted 24/7.

### Slide 6: Home visits and checks

When you apply to be a homestay host, someone from the school will arrange to visit your home. They will need to do this every six months and you will have two weeks’ notice for the visits. It’s just to see that everything’s in order and know who is living in your home with the student. Your home would also need to be checked after any serious incident or emergency.

### Slide 7: The Homestay Responsibility Agreement

If you do become a homestay host, a contract needs be signed by the school representative, you and the student. This is called the Homestay Responsibility Agreement and it’s available in several languages. It’s pretty straightforward and spells out your role so that everything that’s required is clear and transparent. It also includes the information that you would have given in the home visit about what you’d provide for your student. Again, if you had any questions, your ISC or school’s Homestay Coordinator would be able to help you.

### Slide 8: What homestays need to provide:

To prepare for your student’s arrival, you’ll be aware that there are some things that you must provide. The minimum requirements are fairly self-explanatory and your ISC will be able to tell you more details. The main things are that your student will need a room of their own with study facilities. And they’ll need 3 nutritious meals a day and snacks that are in line with their dietary and medical requirements. They’ll have access to all the shared areas and facilities in your home and will eat their meals with you and participate fully in your daily home life. And if anything changed, such as doing renovations or moving house, you’d tell your ISC.

### Slide 9: Insurance

Before your student arrives, you’d need to get insurance that covers their belongings as well as your own. The school isn’t responsible for any legal liabilities that arise from your student staying with you. You’d need a home and contents policy—or if you’re renting, just a contents policy—that includes legal liability for no less than 20 million dollars. This sounds like a lot, but it’s what insurance companies do.

Also, you’d need to check if your policy covers you for personal injury to your student while they are staying with you, OR for any accidental damage that may occur. You want to get the right insurance.

And if any damage did happen to your home that was caused, or allegedly caused by the student, of course, you’d tell your ISC immediately.

### Slide 10: Child Safety laws and Mandatory Reporting

There are some specific laws around Child Safety that you would need to know, and your ISC would help you with this. The main thing to know is that if you became aware of any allegations of child abuse, from any source and in any context, the law says that you must report these immediately to your ISC. This is a big one.

Sometimes people are not sure if they should say something, just in case it’s not true. However, the law says that you MUST report. As a homestay host, you would be required to participate in your school’s Child Safety training, so you would know what to do. And if you had any doubts or concerns about a child, the very first thing to do would be to tell your ISC.

### Slide 11: Working with Children Check (WWCC)

To support the Child Safety laws, there is a thing called a Working with Children Check, which is a compulsory check that’s done on every adult in your household. The actual homestay host—that is, you—needs to be at least 21 years old, and so you would need a Working with Children Check as well. It’s easy to apply for this online and it doesn’t cost you any money because you are listed on the form as a volunteer.

You would need to let your ISC know the date of birth and contact details of all adults in your home, showing them some ID for each adult. They’d also need to know if there are any changes in your household—an adult comes to live with you, or leaves. And if there were a change to the status of the Working with Children Check for any of the adults in your home, again, your ISC would need to know immediately.

An adult in this context means anyone over the age of 18 who lives in your home permanently, or for 30 days or more in a year.

If someone—anyone—in your household turned 18, or an adult often came to stay, they would need to apply for their Working with Children Check, and you’d tell your ISC. They need to know everyone who is in the household.

### Slide 12: Information to give your student

So, at last, your international student has arrived, and you have welcomed them with a smile and a snack and shown them their room. Then you’d show them around your home and explain how to use the facilities. They’ll need a little tour of your area too, including where to find the local shops, pharmacy, public transport, parks, etc. And of course, how to get to school and back home again.

You’d tell them about your household protocols and safety rules, including the behaviour you expect regarding use of the internet, mealtimes, visitors and curfews.

The ISC will already have given them their Student Safety Card, which has vital information including all the contact details they need, such as 24/7 emergency numbers plus the phone number of the ISC. And you’d help them to understand how important this is and to keep it with them all the time.

### Slide 13: Supervision of your student

The rules about supervision of your student are fairly straightforward. If you’re unsure about anything, you can ask the ISC because they know the exact parameters.

You need to know where your student is and who they are with at all times, day and night. But sometimes things happen, and so, if for any reason you couldn’t do this, you would let the school know. Your student can’t supervise younger children, so they can’t be a babysitter. And they’ll need extra special supervision around water, whether it’s a pool, the beach, a river – many international students can’t swim and don’t know the risks.

### Slide 14: Supervision of your student cont.

With older children, if they drive, they’d need to follow your household rules as well as the Victorian road rules, and also have permission from the school because they will have their own Student Driving Policy. Talk it through first with your ISC.

You might want to take your student on a trip during the school holidays, and this could be a wonderful experience, as long as their parents or legal guardian and the school have given permission, and everyone has completed the documentation.

### Slide 15 Supervision of your student cont.

Your student needs to keep you informed, telling you where they are and who they’re with, or whether they’ll be home late or plan to go out with friends.

If they went somewhere without permission, or you couldn’t contact them, even for a couple of hours, you’d ring the ISC immediately.

The big thing to remember would be to keep your ISC informed at all times with any questions, concerns or information. They could help you if you perceived any issues around any part-time work your student may do. Or if you thought they were participating in high-risk activities such as going to dangerous places, staying out past their curfew time, being involved with drugs or alcohol, or any other worrying behaviour. This would be unusual, but remember, your ISC is always there for you.

### Slide 16: Helping your student at school

It’s not your responsibility to ensure that the student passes their subjects at school or to organise tutoring or extra outside help for them if they are struggling. However, you can encourage and support them with their homework and help them to have their school uniform or sports gear ready to go when they need them.

In common with many teenagers, they may sometimes need you to help them get up in time and get to school. International students can become very tired, and their attendance requirements are strict. So this is a valuable way to support them.

And as always, if you had any concerns at all about your student’s welfare, academic progress or attendance issues, remember that your ISC is there for you with information, advice and support.

### Slide 17: Medical responsibilities

As you know, every child has particular needs. The school and the homestay host share the support of international students’ medical needs, and your role would be with the day-to-day support: things like helping them get to appointments.

They’ll have their own health insurance, so you’re not responsible for any of their medical costs, whether they are ongoing, or even if they occur because of an emergency at your home.

### Slide 18: Your role in critical (serious) incidents and emergencies

In the unlikely event that a serious incident or emergency happened that involved your student, or something happened to you or your family and home, then of course you would call triple zero and give first aid, etc. And then you would ring your ISC, so keep their phone number handy. They will ring your student’s parents or legal guardian. The school will have its own procedure on what they call “Critical Incidents” and as a homestay host, you would be required to participate in their training. So if something did go wrong unexpectedly, you and the school would already know what to do.

### Slide 19: Conclusion

I hope this video has helped you to decide whether you would like to go ahead to be a Homestay host. Students deeply value their host families’ warmth and care. It gives them a sense of belonging in their new country. And you could have fun including your student in your daily activities and special occasions, enjoying the cultural differences you all encounter, as well as what you find in common. There’s always a lot of laughter in homestay families.

The big thing to remember is that you would not be doing it alone. Your school’s International Student Coordinator—the ISC—and the Homestay Coordinator if you have one, would always be there for you and your student, with information, advice, support and reassurance.

Thank you for watching this video. May your experience be rewarding and enjoyable.