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## HOMESTAY POLICY

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### 1. Purpose

St Catherine's School is responsible for the pastoral care, welfare and accommodation arrangements of students studying at the School on a student subclass 500 visa. 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. Students may either:

- a) Live in Australia with a parent, immediate family or legal custodian, or
- b) Live in the Illawarra Boarding House; or
- c) Live in Australia under an accommodation arrangement approved by St Catherine's School (during the term breaks only).

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.

### 2. Scope

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.

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 provide a safe environment for children with a disability.

### 3. Definitions

**[Child]:** [for the purposes of this policy a child is defined as 18 years and under]

**[Homestay]:** residential accommodation provided to domestic or international school students by local families, either on a paid or voluntary basis. The majority of school age international students live in homestay accommodation arranged and approved by the student's school.

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

**[VRQA]:** Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

### 4. Policy Statement

St Catherine's School recognises that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's 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



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committed to mitigating risk for all students, with specific policy addressing the needs of these students.

The School will inform all persons in care or supervision of an overseas student, to understand their role and responsibility in protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people under the age of 18, in accordance with the Child Safe Standards.

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 per the International Student Welfare Policy, it is a condition for students on a subclass 500 visa, under 18 years of age to have suitable accommodation and welfare arrangements, that have been approved by the School.

Students under 13 years of age are not able to be accommodated in the School's Boarding House or a Homestay arrangement.

As the St Catherine's Boarding House closes during school holiday periods, it is the School's preference for International Students to travel home and return to the care of their parents or legal guardian during the School holiday periods. If International Students are unable to return home during the term break it may be necessary to put in place Short Term Homestay arrangements.

Stringent selection criteria and monitoring apply to the selection of Homestay accommodation and Homestay Service Providers.

International Students may stay in a short-term homestay arrangement provided that all requirements are met to attain school approval prior to the arrangement taking place. Homestay arrangements may be arranged directly by the School, or organised by an external Homestay Services Provider, however the School's duty of care will not be outsourced to the Homestay Services Provider.

### 4.1 Short Term School Approved Homestay Arrangements

For Homestay arrangements to be approved by the School:

- All members of the household aged over 18 must hold a Working with Children Check which will be verified using the Working with Children Victoria online validation tool;
- A referee check for suitability for child connected work is undertaken by the School;
- Personal identification is checked against the WWCC details (eg Driver's licence);
- A home visit has been undertaken by the International Student Coordinator to ensure the accommodation is appropriate to the student's age and needs and that a separate bedroom has been provided (refer Homestay Approval and Monitoring Form);
- The School's Homestay Responsibility Agreement (or the Homestay Services Provider Agreement) is signed;
- All household members aged over 18 are made aware of the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, reporting procedures, emergency contacts including school, student and parent contact information, and agree to the Child Safety Code of Conduct.



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### 4.2 School Approved External Provider Homestay Arrangements

The School approves the homestay program services of Australian Homestay Network (AHN) to provide accommodation for full fee paying 500 visa subclass students where school organized and approved Homestay accommodation is not available during the School term breaks. AHN helps the School recruit homestay providers, through providing details of agency-screened homestay options for the school to review, visit and potentially approve, prior to the student commencing her homestay placement. Parents need to register directly with AHN via the online application process at [www.homestaynetwork.org](http://www.homestaynetwork.org).

### 4.3 Screening and Monitoring Homestay Arrangements

If the homestay accommodation is being sourced through AHN, AHN conducts an initial screening interview and due diligence on prospective home stay hosts. This includes checking the appropriateness of the accommodation along with collecting identity documentation, Working with Children Checks and referee checks to provide to the School for assessment.

The host and all persons over 18 years of age living in the household must have a current Working with Children Check.

AHN will provide to the School the documentation above and recommendations for a homestay placement.

After reviewing the documentation received from AHN, or if the Homestay is a School organized arrangement, STC will also conduct an initial inspection of the potential host's home (using the Approval and Monitoring Form), before approving the accommodation for the student. This process is completed prior to the student commencing her homestay placement. All homestay provider documentation is kept on file in accordance with the School's Records Management Policy.

The School conducts ongoing regular inspections of homestay providers at 6 monthly intervals. The School's International Student Coordinator also maintains contact with homestay providers, either when particular issues arise, or at least once each term as a monitoring call.

Through the inspection program the School also updates the homestay providers on relevant School information such as child safety information, attendance, emergency contacts and incident reporting procedures. This information is also provided annually in the Family Homestay Guidelines to homestay providers.

The School requires students to live in school approved accommodation for the duration of the term break. Students are not permitted to live alone or only with other students. Should a student not be content in an approved homestay, other placements may be sought, with the assistance of the International Student Coordinator and AHN.

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

Should the School become aware that a student is no longer living in approved accommodation during the term break, the School will report this to the Department of Home Affairs, and advise the student to contact the Department of Home Affairs to ensure visa implications are understood.



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### The School will:

- Seek to organise homestay accommodation of high quality and which provides a child safe, comfortable and caring environment.
- Ensure the homestay accommodation will be provided by a suitable persons aged at least 21 years of age.
- Inspect the homestay and monitor homestay arrangements, including twice yearly visits to verify that the accommodation continues to meet all requirements.
- Inform the Department of Home Affairs of Accommodation Arrangements via PRISMS
- Inform homestay providers of the School's Child Safe and CCYP Reportable Conduct Scheme policy and procedures.
- Record Working with Children's Checks for all adults in the home, prior to the student commencing the stay.
- Provide information and advice to students, parents and homestay providers.
- Provide the student with an International Student Safety Card which includes contact details for the Homestay contact, the School contacts, Emergency Contacts, the Ombudsman and the VRQA
- Monitor attendance/academic performance issues management.

### The Principal will:

- As a CRICOS registered school the Principal has the responsibility to approve the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for unaccompanied international students aged under 18.
- 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; and
- Require the student, homestay provider and the Deputy Principal – School Operations or the International Student Coordinator to sign a Homestay Responsibility Agreement prior to the student commencing the Homestay arrangement. This will outline the house rules and requirements as well as homestay costs and methods of payment.
- Ensure that, to prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest, a teacher or an employee of the school cannot act as a homestay provider.
- Manage dispute resolution relating to homestay as per the International Students Complaints Resolution Process.
- (Complaints that cannot be resolved by the school should be submitted in writing to the VRQA).
- Liaise with the VRQA regarding complex or significant international student management matters (eg critical incidents)

### The Homestay provider will:

- 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



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- Advise the School and provide Working With Children Checks prior to any additional adults commencing residence at the location
- Ensure that the maximum number of international students per homestay is 3 at all times
- Sign a Homestay Responsibility Agreement which outlines the weekly fee and provision of the following:
  - Three meals per day
  - Facilities including a single separate bedroom
  - Bed
  - Study facilities, including a desk, study light and bookcase
  - Wardrobe
  - Towels and linen
  - Gas, electricity and heating costs
  - Use of living areas within residence

### The student will:

- 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. The school must also hold relevant contact details and inform the homestay of the arrangement prior to the student being allowed to stay away
- Accept responsibility for phone and internet expenses unless otherwise agreed on the Homestay Responsibility Agreement
- Display respect for the Homestay family members and their home at all times
- Display respect for any Homestay Rules considered necessary for the smooth functioning of the specific family Homestay routines
- Communicate openly and honestly at all times with Homestay parents and be willing to ask questions when unsure of any matters of concern
- Return to their Homestay Residence no later than 9:45pm on Friday and Saturday or 7.45pm Sunday evenings.

### Fees:

- During holidays, fees are to be arranged directly between the homestay provider and the student's parents.
- 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.

### Over 18 Students:

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

## 5. Responsibility

Administration of this Policy applies to the Principal, the Deputy Principal – School Operations, the International Student Coordinator and the Admissions Office.



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### 6. Communication of Policy

This policy is accessible to all staff, students, contractors, volunteers, parents/guardians, visitors, external stakeholders and other members of the School community via the Portal Policies page and the website. The School also communicates this policy through newsletters and inductions, and is available at sign in locations at the School.

### 7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed for effectiveness:

- As part of St Catherine's School policy review schedule (every 2 years);
- As required, with changes to current legislation, research, policy and best practice;
- Following issues raised through the Complaints and Grievances Policy;
- After any significant child safety incident; and
- Upon receipt of staff, student, or parent/guardian feedback.

### 8. Related Legislation

- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018)
- Department of Home Affairs Student Visa requirements [www.border.gov.au/Trav/Stud/school-sector-students](http://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Stud/school-sector-students) Crimes Act 1958 (Vic).
- Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe Schools) Act 2015 (Vic).
- Child Safe Standards

### 9. Related Documentation

- St Catherine's School Child Safe Code of Conduct
- St Catherine's School Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy
- Homestay Approval and Monitoring Form
- Enrolment Policy
- Enrolment Contract – International
- St Catherine's International Student and EAL Policy
- St Catherine's Student Accommodation Policy
- St Catherine's Community Code of Conduct Policy
- Homestay Responsibility Agreement
- Conditions for Homestay
- St Catherine's International Business Practices
- Homestay Family Guidelines Handbook
- Third Party Engagement and Onboarding Policy