





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

AFS Intercultural Programs, Australia acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our organisation is located and where we deliver our programs.

We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present.

AFS Intercultural Programs, Australia is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.





## Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY.....	2
AUSTRALIA AT A GLANCE .....	6
Where Is It? .....	6
Climate .....	7
Language .....	7
Religion .....	7
Government .....	7
Electricity Outlets.....	7
Public Holidays .....	8
Time Zones.....	8
Telephone Calls .....	8
AUSTRALIAN BEHAVIOURS.....	9
Attitudes and Public Behaviour .....	9
Manners .....	9
Drinking and Smoking .....	9
FAMILY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA .....	10
Family Structure & Roles.....	10
Greetings.....	10
Expressing Affection.....	10
Communication.....	11
The Home.....	11
House Work & Rules .....	11
Work.....	12
Food .....	12
SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA.....	13
Facts About Australian Schools.....	13
Frequently asked questions about schools.....	14
UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURAL LEARNING .....	15
Important things to remember your intercultural learning experience.....	15
Culture Shock .....	15
Adjustment Cycle .....	15
AFS Education Goals .....	16



BEFORE COMING TO AUSTRALIA .....	19
ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA .....	19
Airport .....	19
Orientation .....	20
Things to Do in the First Days .....	20
Things your host family can help you with .....	20
YOUR EXPERIENCE IN AUSTRALIA .....	21
SAFETY TIPS .....	22
Safety in and around the Home .....	22
Safety Outside of the Home .....	22
Emergencies .....	22
AFS RULES AND POLICIES .....	23
Driving .....	23
Drugs .....	23
Drinking .....	23
Smoking .....	23
Hitchhiking .....	23
Sexual Consent .....	23
TRAVEL POLICY .....	24
Travel with Host Family .....	24
Travel with Family from Home Country .....	24
Independent Travel .....	24





## G'day and Welcome!

Congratulations on being accepted into the AFS program to Australia. Your time with AFS Australia will be a unique, enriching and interesting adventure focused on building your global and intercultural competence about Australian customs, culture and language with the help of your host family, school and local community. As you develop lifelong relationships in Australia it will also be a great opportunity for you to share your culture with your host family and friends.

AFS Australia is here to support you and your host family during your time in Australia. We encourage you to seek out and participate in local social, sporting, community and school events. These events will enrich your time in Australia and help you establish communication with your new host community, friends and family and your support person will help you adjust to life in a new and exciting country.

This booklet has been prepared to provide some basic information on life in Australia and should be referred to during your stay. We hope this booklet will help you build the confidence to ask more questions as it does not provide all the answers. Remember to bring this booklet with you as you will need to refer to it during your stay.

Enjoy your time in Australia and make the most of the opportunities that are available to you to ensure you have a rewarding and educational AFS experience.

Remember, we are here to help you get the most out of your program! Get in touch with your support person, local volunteers or AFS staff whenever you need to.

## Let your adventure begin!



AFS AUSTRALIA OFFICE ADDRESS  
Level 4  
418A Elizabeth St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010

AFS AUSTRALIA POSTAL ADDRESS  
PO Box 5  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012

Telephone: +61 2 9215 0077 | Email: [ausafs@afs.org](mailto:ausafs@afs.org) | Website: [www.afs.org.au](http://www.afs.org.au)  
24/7 Emergency Phone: +61 414 594 694 – Mobile & WhatsApp

Facebook: /AFSAustralia | Instagram: @afsaustralia  
**Share your stories with us online!**





## AUSTRALIA AT A GLANCE

We are honoured and excited that you have chosen Australia for your AFS experience and we would like to introduce our country to you. Australia is much more than Kangaroos and the Opera House – it is a place of vast and varied landscapes, unique wildlife and interesting cultural experiences.

The population of Australia is just above 24 million people (in 2017) with 49% of the population either born overseas or has a parent who was born overseas. As a result, Australian society is very multicultural and diverse – immigrants from all over the world have turned Australia into a melting pot of many cultures, languages and food.

Australia's first peoples – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups (also known as

Indigenous Australians) are the oldest living cultural group history in the world extending back at least 65,000 years. Indigenous Australian's have a unique spirituality and belief system. They identify themselves through their land areas, their relationship to others and their language and stories - which may be expressed through ceremony, the arts, family, religion, and sports.

Australia is a continent with vast and beautiful spaces and landscapes however the majority of Australians live in cities and regional towns. You may find yourself hosted in a suburb, small town, semi-rural community or farming community – very few students find themselves in Australian capital cities.



### Where Is It?

The continent of Australia is the largest country in Oceania and is made of two main land masses: mainland Australia and the island state of Tasmania. Our closest international neighbours include New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Pacific Islands of Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands.

Australia itself is made up of six (6) states and two (2) main territories:

#### States / Territories & Capitals:

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. New South Wales (NSW) - Sydney  | 6. Tasmania (TAS) - Hobart                       |
| 2. Queensland (QLD) - Brisbane     | 7. Northern Territory (NT) - Darwin              |
| 3. Victoria (VIC) - Melbourne      | 8. Australian Capital Territory (ACT) - Canberra |
| 4. South Australia (SA) - Adelaide |  |
| 5. Western Australia (WA) - Perth  |  |

Other territories of Australia include the inhabited territories of Christmas Island, Norfolk Islands and the Cocos Islands as well as the uninhabited Coral Seas, Heard, McDonald, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, and the Australian Antarctic Territory.



## Climate

Australia has four seasons which are opposite to those in Europe and North America:

Season	Months
Summer	December – February
Autumn	March – May
Winter	June – August
Spring	September – November

In the following capital cities: Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth the average temperatures are: Summer 16°C-26°C and Winter 0°C-14°C. However, Tasmania and Victoria are typically colder than other states in the winter. For the sub-tropic and tropical cities of Brisbane, Darwin and Alice Springs the average temperatures range between 16°C-40°C.

Seasonal variations are not extreme and it is rare for temperatures to drop below 0°C or above 41 °C. Rain is also variable and seasonal so you should come prepared for any type of weather during your stay in Australia.

## Language

There are over 300 languages spoken in Australia. English is the dominant language in Australia however Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Italian are the most common second languages spoken – many migrants and their families are bilingual. It is important to note that Australian and British English spelling is the same however the Australian accent and use

of creative and colourful slang distinguishes Australian English from British and American English.

## Religion

There are more than 100 religions practiced in Australia. Christianity is the biggest religion followed in Australia however other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Hinduism are also practiced. Australia has no state religion and up to 30% of the population is secular.

## Government

Australia is an independent democratic member of the British Commonwealth with a parliamentary form of government. The Head of State is Queen Elizabeth II who is represented by a Governor General in Australia. The Head of Government in Australia is the Prime Minister who is the leader of the political party or coalition of parties who were elected by the Australian people and therefore hold a majority in the federal parliament.

## Electricity Outlets



Be sure to bring with you an international adaptor if your country has different electricity outlets.



## Public Holidays

Australia's national public holidays include New Year's Day, Australia Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, ANZAC Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

There are other public holidays for individual states and territories. Check with your host family or the Australian Government website for additional public holidays such as the Queen's Birthday and Labour day as they differ in each state and territory.

## What do the Australian Public Holidays celebrate?

- 26<sup>th</sup> January – Australia Day. This is Australia's national day and celebrates the arrival of the first fleet at Sydney Cove on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1788.
- 25<sup>th</sup> April – ANZAC Day. This is a day's in remembrance for the courage and sacrifice of Australia and New Zealand Army Corps soldiers from World War One and subsequent wars.

## Time Zones

**New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Queensland:**  
GMT/UTC +10 (Eastern Standard Time)

**South Australia and the Northern Territory:**  
GMT/UTC +9.5 (Central Time)

**Western Australia:** GMT/UTC +8 (Western Time)

Daylight savings is observed in NSW, VIC, TAS and SA. Daylight savings starts on the first Sunday in October when clocks are put forward one hour, it then ends on the first Sunday in April when clocks are put back one hour.

## Telephone Calls

Each state and territory has its own area code. If you are calling a landline from another state or territory you must use the state area code. You do not need to use these codes if you are calling a mobile phone.

To make an international call you need to dial "0011" + Country Code + remainder of the phone number.

**Country Code for Australia:** 61

**Dialling out of Australia:** 0011

### State Area Codes

02 Australian Capital Territory

07 Queensland

02 New South Wales

08 Northern Territory

03 Victoria

08 South Australia

03 Tasmania

08 Western Australia



## AUSTRALIAN BEHAVIOURS

Australians are a diverse people and one should avoid applying or believing stereotypes. The following information is a general guide to understanding what some Australians may do or say which may be different to you.

### Attitudes and Public Behaviour

Australians are famous for their laid-back, down-to-earth and friendly nature – they tend to be informal in conversation, dress and relations with others. A handshake, smile, nod and greeting of 'hi' or 'how are you going?' are common greetings in Australia - they also use names quite often when they are talking to each other. Australians are also polite and respectful in public – sniffing, spitting and swearing in public are not acceptable

Australian law prohibits discrimination against others based on culture, race, sexuality, gender, wealth or disability. Australians strongly believe in equality – waitstaff, taxi drivers, bank tellers, shop attendants, lawyers, doctors and all other professions are treated with the same respect and as equals. You will be viewed negatively if you treat customer service professionals with disrespect.

### Manners

Manners are extremely important and the words 'please' and 'thank you' are used frequently. The typical response to 'thank you' and 'sorry' in Australia is 'no worries'. It means you're welcome.

Meals and meal times may be different for each Australian family however table manners are considered important by all Australians at both restaurants and in the home. At meals Australians use a knife, fork and spoon to eat in the same manner as

Europeans. It is polite to close your mouth when eating and not make loud chewing noises or burping during your meal. During your time in Australia it will be a great opportunity to try new foods and dining experiences however if you don't like the food apologise and explain what is wrong. After meals in the home it is considered polite to take your dishes to the kitchen and offer to help wash up and clear the table.

It is important that you are considerate of your host family during your time in their home. Talk to your host family about house rules concerning showers, telephone calls, petrol and internet. Australia suffers from frequent droughts so don't take long showers and monitor water consumption.

### Drinking and Smoking

While Australians are famous for enjoying a beer, it is against the law for a person under the age of 18 years to drink alcohol in public or to purchase or be supplied alcoholic beverages. As a result, teenagers who are under 18 do not participate actively in pub or bar culture.

The purchase of cigarettes by a person under the age of 18 years is against Australian law. Australian laws around smoking are also getting increasingly stricter – smoking is not allowed in a range of public places such as restaurants, cafes, playgrounds, train stations and shopping centres. Smoking is considered culturally unacceptable in many places.



## FAMILY LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

*“Being an AFS student starts with your host family...”*

Living with an Australian family will be an interesting and rewarding experience. Aussie families come in all shapes and sizes, each one is different sharing different values and characteristics. Diversity is everywhere in Australia – family structures may differ; for example, one parent or same-sex parents are considered normal Australian families. Additionally, as a country that prides itself on its multiculturalism your host family may also have a diverse cultural background. Families also come from different socioeconomic backgrounds however all host families have volunteered to welcome you into their homes, families and country. Remember our host families are not paid – whatever they have, they have offered to share with you.

### Family Structure & Roles

There are more than 6 million unique families in Australia made up of 45% of couples with children, 38% couples with no kids, 16% single parent-families and an increasing number of same sex couples.

Australian families can be more matriarchal compared to some Latin or Asian families with mothers usually responsible for the discipline and decisions regarding the children. The authority of both host parents should be respected and obeyed during your stay in Australia.

Australians do not have special pronouns to show respect to older people. Most children in Australia address their parents as ‘Mum’ and ‘Dad’. There are many nicknames for Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles – check with your host family on what they would like to be called. Other adults may be called by their

first names whilst teachers are addressed by more formally in most cases.

Australian children are generally independent and given room to experience life with limits set by parents. It is common for Australian teenagers to take care of themselves and younger siblings when parents are at work and some over the age of 15 years may work part time as well.

### Greetings

Greetings in Australia are usually verbal and informal. A simple “hi”, “how are you” or handshake are common greetings. Kisses and hugs are less common and usually done amongst close family and friends.

### Expressing Affection

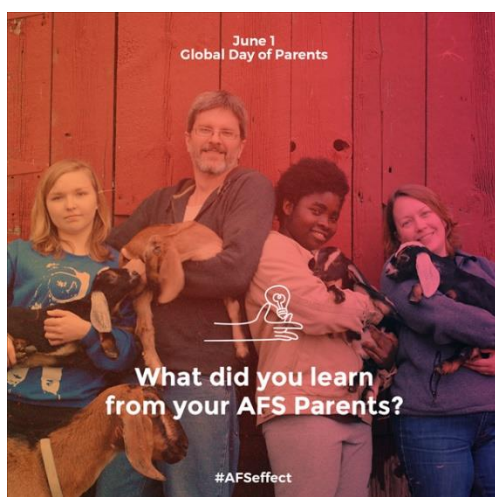
Australians are family-oriented but may not be as physically expressive as families in Latin or European cultures. Family members may hug or kiss each other but not necessarily everyday – it’s important to note each family is different. Australians commonly express





themselves verbally or through smiles, nods and pats on the back.

Families also express affection through participating in activities such as watching tv, working around the house or garden, having picnics or barbecues and going to sporting events together – prepare for the possibility that your host family will express affection differently than your natural family. Smiles and laughter are signs of strong affection in Aussie families – family members may even tease one another but will do so in good fun and Aussie humour.



## Communication

Australians appreciate open communication and honest discussions. Young people are encouraged to discuss their activities and their problems with their parents and you are encouraged to do the same with your host parents.

In Australia, it is polite and respectful to look into each other's eyes when you are talking and listening – this includes parents, teachers and other adults.

## The Home

Homes in Australia can range from large properties on farms in regional areas to small apartments in the city. Some Australian families especially those part of AFS live in towns that are quite small or on large farms or properties far from the town centres.

Whether you are placed in a small town, big city or suburb each environment offers a unique Australian experience with many special opportunities and challenges.

## House Work & Rules

Most Australian families do not have housekeepers, cooks or nannies therefore everyone shares in the housework – including fathers and sons. Each family distributes chores differently and it may be expected of you to share in all the housework – or at least keep your room clean.

Some Australian children share a bedroom with siblings and do not have complete privacy and you may have to share a bedroom with a sibling in your host family. It is very important to respect the privacy of your host family members especially as most bedroom and some bathroom doors do not have locks. Always remember to knock on the door and wait for a reply before entering a room.

Your host family may have other family or house rules which may include asking for permission such as making plans to go out alone or with friends or curfews. Remember your host parents are responsible for your safety and care while you are in Australia and may be protective.



### Work

The typical Australian work week is from Monday through to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm. It is common for both parents to work either full time or part time and many teens work part time after school and on weekends to earn their own spending money. As an exchange student under a student visa you have the opportunity to work up to 20 hours per week while in Australia without special permission.

### Food

Australian cuisine has been influenced by a range of cultures. What is considered typical Australian food such as a Sunday roast is derived from British and continental cuisine. However, the multicultural nature of Australia extends into the cuisine and you will be able to find and try a range of cuisines such as Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Lebanese, Italian, Greek and Indian. Vegemite, pavlova, lamingtons and meat pies are regarded as iconic Australian foods.






## SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA

Each country has its own unique history, culture and way of educating its young people which you will get to experience. As you are entering Australia as an exchange student on a student visa rather than a tourist it is your responsibility to abide by the following rules:

- To attend school full time
- To ensure your school work is done and to show progress
- To respect the school rules
- To behave cooperatively in school

*World Peace Begins in  
High School...*



If you fail to meet any of your responsibilities as an exchange student, your school may report you to AFS and your student visa may be cancelled and you will be sent home. Also note that students may not be given credit for schoolwork performed while on exchange and you may have already graduated from high school in your home country.

### Facts About Australian Schools

- There is 13 years of primary and secondary school in Australia, from Kindergarten to Year 12.
- Senior High School runs from years 11-12, during these years students prepare for a certificate that confirms they have completed their secondary education – this assessment determines university entrance.
- There are two types of schools in Australia government (public) and non-governmental schools (private, independent). Private and independent schools rely heavily on tuition fees from students and their families – most were established by religious denominations.
- There are coeducational and single sex schools in Australia.
- The Australian school year commences in late January or early February and finishes in December.
- Students attend school Monday to Friday from around 9am – 3:30 pm.
- There are two breaks during the school day – recess and lunch.
- Students in Australia wear uniforms to school it is the responsibility of the student (not the host family) to pay for their own uniform.

Most AFS students are enrolled in Year 10 or 11 in Australia and as such you will have the opportunity to pick some of your subjects. The range of subjects taught differs from school to school but you can expect to learn English, history, geography, science and maths as they are required subjects. You may also take music, drama or art as an elective. Most schools in Australia also have some form of sport as a compulsory activity and you may have the chance to take part in other sporting activities through school swimming and athletics carnivals.



## Frequently asked questions about schools

### How do I get to school?

There are many ways to get to school – discuss with your host family whether you will have to walk, catch the bus, train or be driven by your host parents.

### Who pays for what?

AFS is responsible for your general tuition fees and required books. If you must take public transport to go to and from school AFS may also provide financial assistance.

Your host family is responsible for providing three meals a day including lunches for school.

You are responsible for paying for your own school uniform as it is personal clothing. You are also responsible for paying for other uniforms including sport or work, snacks purchased at school, pens, pencils, paper, and any additional fees from elective subjects and school excursions.

### What rules will the school have?

School rules differ from school to school as schools and teachers are responsible for all student's welfare and safety. Generally, students need permission to leave the classroom or school building and teachers expect students to be on time for class and dressed appropriately in the school uniform.

In Australia, if you are sick or absent from school you are expected to have a written letter from your host parents or a doctor's certificate to explain your absence. Check your host school's rules within the first week.

### What if I have a problem at school?

If you have a problem at school, you have a few options:

- Talk to your host family
- Talk with your friends at school
- Talk to your teacher, year adviser or school counsellor
- Talk with your AFS support contact





## UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

You are about to embark on an intercultural learning experience with AFS Australia. Intercultural learning refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different from their own to live together peacefully. To successfully achieve intercultural learning, it is necessary to recognise the importance of culture. Culture is the ideas, attributes, customs, and social behaviours of a group of people or society. It is an important step during your AFS experience to learn about the culture, beliefs and traditions of your host family and in turn share your culture, traditions and beliefs with them. This understanding will provide insight into the differences between your native culture and that of the host country.

### Important things to remember your intercultural learning experience

- Always keep the lines of communication open – ask questions, seek clarity and keep talking
- Respect the differences
- Be aware that peoples body language, manners and reactions can be different to what you are used to or what you consider 'correct'
- In times of stress and illness understanding a new culture and language may be difficult
- Remember your role as a hosted student is challenging!
- AFS offers an educational experience not an opportunity to be a tourist and the true value of AFS is the people not the place.

### Culture Shock

Culture shock often occurs when we are faced with a new environment very different from what we are familiar with. Everybody experiences culture shock differently reactions differ from insecurity and discomfort to a total inability to cope. As you are traveling with AFS you have the benefit of receiving a quality orientation and preparation prior to departing your native country and arriving in Australia. The AFS support network, returnees, volunteers and the AFS staff are available to assist you during your transition into a new culture.

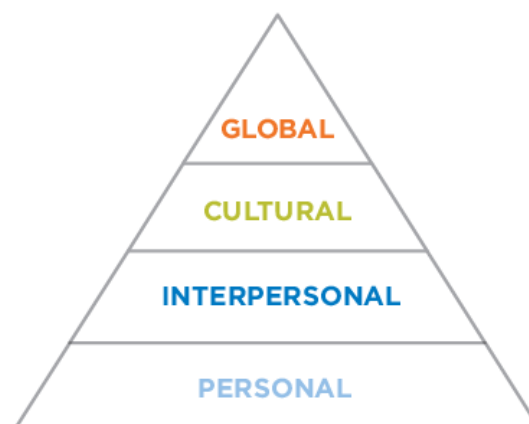
### Adjustment Cycle

International exchange is a challenging yet wonderful experience and at times it can feel like hard work. It is natural for students to have highs and lows throughout their exchange the same way we do in everyday life – however this can be heightened with the added challenge of culture shock, homesickness and language barriers. Each student's experience and transition into a new country will be different but for everyone it means gaining a new family, culture, school and friends.



## AFS Education Goals

AFS promotes 16 Educational Goals which are designed to support the organisations mission to develop participants knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve intercultural competencies as intercultural sensitivity and competency is critical to overcoming conflict and creating intercultural understanding. These 16 goals are divided into four categories: global, cultural, interpersonal and personal.



### Personal

1. Self-Awareness:
  - a. To become more fully self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively and to see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture
  - b. To learn how to manage their internal moods, emotions and impulses, and to use their inner resources to handle stress and ambiguity and to show patience with other people who are in learning situations.
2. Creative Thinking
  - a. To view ordinary things, events and values from a fresh perspective so they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions
3. Critical Thinking
  - a. To look beyond superficial appearances and to be sceptical of stereotypes
  - b. To form their own opinions based on recognizing that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution
4. Motivation and Self-confidence
  - a. To be comfortable and eager to pursue new learning situations
  - b. To be comfortable seeking support and receiving constructive criticism
  - c. To feel confident in their own abilities to have a strong sense of self-worth and to be self-reliant
5. Defining self in terms of ideals and values
  - a. To develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.
  - b. To define and value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth and to resist peer pressure that belittles the value of other individuals.

### Interpersonal

6. Empathy
  - a. To listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.
  - b. To have a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expand their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings and realities of others
  - c. To be able to manage disagreements with others effectively and respectfully



7. Flexibility and Social Skills
  - a. To be comfortable handling a wide range of social situations and to adapt to new environment's by applying appropriate behaviours in diverse contexts.
  - b. To enjoy themselves in the company of others and to be less preoccupied with their own needs or how others view them.
  - c. To adjust to changing social circumstances and show greater flexibility in adjusting to new people, social situations and cultural norms.
8. Communication Skills
  - a. To develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for the other person.
  - b. To express themselves easily both verbally and non-verbally
  - c. To converse actively with a wide range of people
  - d. To speak with confidence in front of large groups
9. Commitment to others and contributing to the group
  - a. To engage with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for their goals and decisions
  - b. To contribute actively and positively in school, community and family life
  - c. To be worthy of and to inspire trust

## Cultural

10. Building Intercultural Friendships
  - a. To interact with people and communities that are different from their own and to develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds
  - b. To actively seek out and form new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds
11. Cultural knowledge and awareness
  - a. To become more aware of their own culture and recognize its influence on their behaviour and attitudes
  - b. To learn about and understand the institutions, customs, traditions, practices and current issues in the host country and to understand the values, attitudes and behaviours in
  - c. To describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures and be able to discuss cultures without stereotyping or making judgemental statements
  - d. To understand the concepts of "culture" and intercultural adaption
12. Foreign Language skills and non-verbal communication
  - a. To communicate effectively in multicultural environments: to speak, read and write in the language of the host culture and come to understand its jokes and humour, and to recognize, use and react appropriately to non-verbal signals of the host country.
  - b. To appreciate the value of learning and using other languages
13. Intercultural Effectiveness
  - a. To recognize cultural difference and to adapt their behaviour and perception according to the cultural context



- b. To appreciate diversity and display tolerance and respect for people from with diverse backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, lifestyles and values
- c. To reduce intercultural anxiety concerning exposure to new people, social situations and cultural norms.

## Global

- 14. Global concern: interest in and concern about world affairs and awareness of one's choices on others
  - a. To develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs, to develop a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in understanding world situations and problems
  - b. To have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues that affect people and divide us, such as human rights, environmental issues and poverty.
- 15. Global understanding: appreciation of cultural interdependence
  - a. To understand the interdependence of the global community and have an increased awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world
  - b. To gain in competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures
- 16. Commitment to contributing to the world community
  - a. To be willing and ready to work with others to help build peace, to improve world conditions and to commit to actions that will bring about a just and peaceful world.
  - b. To engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of the local and global communities.





## BEFORE COMING TO AUSTRALIA

- RESEARCH! Search the internet, visit the library and talk to returnees to gather as much information as possible about your new host country, school, community and culture.
- Send your host family a letter or email expressing your excitement about the upcoming exchange and your appreciation for their hospitality and generosity - you may like to give them a short call to get to know them.
- Gather some photos of your family, friends, home and country to show your new family and friends in Australia.
- Consider bringing a small gift from your country to give to your host family as a thank you.
- Pack lightly – keep in mind the weather and duration of your stay.
- Do NOT overpack – domestic flights from Sydney to your host community have strict weight limits for luggage.
- Check Australian customs rules and regulations. Australia has strict quarantine rules which dictate what you can and cannot bring into Australia.

*"Ask, Ask, Ask. Sometimes you feel like an idiot, not understanding and always asking questions. If you do the opposite and pretend you understand, you will make many unnecessary mistakes"*

*AFS Returnee*

## ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA

### Airport

When you land in Australia one or more AFS volunteers will greet you at your arrival airport and guide you to your connecting flight if you are not hosted in or near your arrival airport. If you will be hosted in or near your arrival airport your host family will meet you.

Most AFS exchange students arrive on the same day and there are a limited number of volunteers to meet all students. Do not panic if you do not see an AFS volunteer's immediately upon your arrival, stay in a visible place and look out for a volunteer in an AFS t-shirt.





## Orientation

All AFS students participate in an orientation within the first few weeks of their arrival. Here you will get to know other students hosted in or near your community and many AFS volunteers. This will be a great opportunity for you to ask questions about your host school and community. You will be notified of your orientation by a local AFS volunteer after you have settled into your host home.

## Things to Do in the First Days

When you first arrive in Australia let your family back home know that you have arrived safely. Spend time with your new host family and get to know them and the new community you will be living in. It is important for you to discuss with your host parents any rules or responsibilities they have for you. Some questions you might consider asking your host parents within the first few days include:

- Can I use the phone? How often? What about international calls?
- Can I use the computer/internet? Are there any rules? Can I download things?

- What house work/cleaning am I expected to do?
- What do I do with my dirty clothes?
- Do I have a curfew?
- Can I go out alone?
- Can I invite friends over or go to their house?
- Are there any bathroom rules or shower/water restrictions?
- Do I need to buy my own toiletries and hygiene products? Where from?
- Are there any rules at meal times?
- What is OK to eat when I want a snack?
- How will I get to school?

## Things your host family can help you with

- Opening an Australian bank account
- Enrolling in school and getting your school uniform and books (Host families are not responsible for paying for your school uniforms)
- Determining how you will get to school and around the local community
- Showing you around your local community.





## YOUR EXPERIENCE IN AUSTRALIA

It is important that you immerse yourself in your intercultural experience in Australia with your host family and community and as such it is recommended that you limit the contact you have with your family at home. Constant contact will remind you of home and can lead to homesickness. It can also slow down the process of adapting to your new family and country.

Your host family like any family may not be perfect. You may have disagreements and differences with your host parents and siblings just as you do with your natural family. Respect your host family as they have opened their home to you and offered to share their life with you and are not getting paid to do so!

If things are not going well with your host family do not despair. Talk to your local support person about the problem, he or she

may be able to help you speak to your host family about the issues and provide solutions to move forward. You may find that the problems you are having can be solved by better communication and understanding between you and your host family. Ease and comfort may not come overnight or even in the first months. Do not assume “things will be better if I have a different host family”. Take your time to get to know your host family and adjust to the culture and way of life – it is all a part of the intercultural learning experience.

If you are however having serious issues AFS is here to help and you should contact your support person immediately. Your safety and physical and emotional wellbeing is our primary concern and we want to ensure you have a safe and rewarding experience in Australia.





## SAFETY TIPS

Australia is a relatively safe country however it is your responsibility to ensure your own personal safety. AFS is also here to guide you in unsafe situations and with any questions in relation to your safety through your support person who you can approach for help at any time. Your host family is responsible for your safety during your time in Australia. Talk your host family about any situation in which you feel uncertain, unsafe or frightened.

### Safety in and around the Home

Questions that you should ask your host family:

- Do you lock the doors and the windows?
- When should doors be locked?
- Will I have my own house key?
- What should I do if I am home alone and some stranger knocks on the door?
- In case of an emergency who do I contact?
- Where are the emergency contact numbers?
- How should I answer the phone?
- Are there any appliances that I should not use of that often cause problems?

### Safety Outside of the Home

Tell your host family where you are going, who you are with and how to be contacted when you go out with friends.

Also consider asking your host family the following questions to ensure your own personal safety:

- Are there any unsafe areas in the community where I live?
- Where should I not go during the day/night?
- What are the rules for going out at night?
- What time should I be home?
- Is it safe to use public transport at all times of the day?
- How do I keep safe when I am out and about alone?


### Emergencies

Always keep the phone number of your host family on you. In case of an emergency you should try and contact your host family, an AFS local contact person or the AFS Australia office.

#### AFS Australia Office

Phone: +61 2 9215 0077

24/7 Emergency Phone: 0414 594 694 (inside Australia); +61 414 594 695 (outside of Australia).

Outside of business hours AFS staff are available on the 24-hour emergency mobile phone. You will find this number on What'sApp too .

**National Emergency Phone Number:** 000 (Fire, Ambulance and Police)



## AFS RULES AND POLICIES

AFS Australia is responsible for your wellbeing and safety during your time here and as a result have established a set of rules and policies. AFS students hosted in Australia are subject to Australian law – should your actions lead to legal actions AFS will provide guidance however we are not able to protect a student from legal proceedings. Breaching any of the following rules or policies set out by AFS may be a cause for an early return to your home country.

### Driving

AFS students are forbidden to drive a car or any other motorised vehicle on public roads.

### Drugs

All AFS participants are forbidden to use drugs not prescribed for medical purposes and any other illegal substances. In Australia use or possession of drugs is punishable by law. It is important that AFS students avoid associating or socialising with drug users this is a concern AFS takes very seriously.

### Drinking

All students under the age of 18 years are prohibited from purchasing or drinking alcohol in accordance with Australian law.

### Smoking

All students under the age of 18 years are prohibited from purchasing or smoking cigarettes in accordance with Australian law.

### Hitchhiking

All AFS students in Australia are forbidden to hitchhike – this is a dangerous practice and AFS cannot ensure the safety or assume responsibility for students who chose to hitchhike.

### Sexual Consent

Cultures differ in their views on appropriate sexual behaviour. In Australia the legal age of sexual consent is 16 (17 in Tasmania and South Australia). If you are sexually active it is your responsibility to protect yourself against pregnancy and any sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



## TRAVEL POLICY

### Travel with Host Family

Host Parents are responsible for a student's travel while in their care. Students must obtain permission by host parents prior to making any travel arrangements and they must provide their host families with their itinerary and contact details. Travel must not affect school however if this cannot be avoided the school must give its permission.

Host families may travel with their students. Allow their students to travel with or stay overnight with an approved family or friend or may allow their students to travel with an organised group with responsible leaders (e.g. School, church, youth group or AFS sanctioned activity). A contact number must always be left with the AFS volunteers in case there is an emergency in the student's natural family or country and urgent contact is needed.

### Travel with Family from Home Country

AFS discourages visits from relatives and friends from home during your exchange as it is seen as a disruption to your program and adjustment into your new host country. However, if such visits occur at the end of the program students may be "program released". It is important to note that host families have no obligation to offer their homes to any member of the host students' family. Students must inform AFS of any intended visits by family or friends from their home country – AFS will only give permission for the visit if your host family, school, and AFS volunteers agree that it will not disrupt your program and adjustment.

### Independent Travel

Any travel that involves the student travelling and staying overnight without either the host family, another person approved by the host parents, an AFS volunteer or an organised group with responsible leaders is considered independent travel. To embark on any independent travel students must:

- Receive permission from host parents.
- Receive permission from the host school if during school time.
- Submit your travel waiver to the support coordinator or your support person in the national office at least one (1) month before travel.
- The AFS Australia office in Sydney will contact AFS in your home country who – if they and your natural parents agree- will obtain a 'waiver' from your parents.
- Travel must not be booked until all steps have been completed and a waiver is granted. The earlier you get your application in the earlier you will be able to book your travel.
- Remember while travelling you are still on the AFS program and must still abide by the AFS rules and policies.
- The local AFS Volunteers and your host family must know your itinerary and contact details.

Additionally, if you wish to participate in any activities which AFS Australia deems as 'high risk' – activities such as motorised activities, outdoor activities, team/school sports, water sports, winter sports and activities such as skydiving, bungee jumping and hang gliding – you will need to fill out an application for a high-risk activity waiver.



AFS Australia welcomes you.







**AFS Intercultural Programs, Australia**

Level 4, 418a Elizabeth St  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Australia

Postal address:

PO Box 5  
Strawberry Hills NSW 2012  
Australia

Phone number: +61 2 9215 0077

24/7 Emergencies: +61 414 594 694

Website: [www.afs.org.au](http://www.afs.org.au)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/AFSAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/AFSAustralia)

Instagram: [@afsaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/afsaustralia)



**Intercultural  
Programs**  
*Australia*