



SCOUTS AUSTRALIA INTERNATIONAL VENTURER EXCHANGE PROGRAM

INFORMATION FOR HOST FAMILIES

This document has been prepared to give families some insight into the purpose of the program, its expectations of them as hosts, as well as some hints for "survival".

Thank you for your interest, I hope it develops into participation in what those who have gone before you have found to be a most rewarding exercise for all members of the family through the lasting friendships that are formed with overseas families as well as other hosts

The experiences you can offer will provide memories for a lifetime for your guest and yourselves.

General Information

In contrast to other exchange programs the Scout International Student Exchange Program is unique in that it:

- * is available only to members of the Scout Association
- * provides an opportunity to be a host to an overseas Scout
- * provides a short term, approximately 6 week, opportunity for Venturer age Scouts to travel, live, and study with fellow Scouts in other countries. This chance, limited though it may be, of experiencing life in an entirely different environment provides a wonderful opportunity for personal development for those fortunate enough to be selected. As these young people will be the future leaders of our communities, the breadth of experience and widening of horizons has the potential to play an important role in the shaping of tomorrow's world.

The overseas travel, or home hosting components, each provides rewarding opportunities and experiences for all those who become involved.

While many Scouts and Venturers have the opportunity to meet fellow members and experience short periods of home hosting when they attend Jamborees and Ventures in countries around the world, this Program has the advantage of longer hosting and the experience of 'normal' living, schooling and scouting.

For Australia the outline details are as follows:

- 1 Between late June and the end of August of any year a number of overseas (at the moment from England, Denmark, and Japan) Scout students of Venturer age, usually 15 - 18 years, will visit to be hosted by Scout families in some States.
- 2 Sending families are expected to pay all travel and documentation expenses, suitable clothing etc, and to provide adequate pocket money for the period.
- 3 Host families are expected to:
 - have a child who is an active Venturer
 - provide documented support from both the Scout Group and, in particular, the Venturer Unit
 - have the approval of the local District Commissioner
 - provide the names and addresses / phone numbers of two non-Scouting referees
 - have the support of a school attended by one of their children, such that the visitor will be accepted for attendance over the period of the stay.
 - provide suitable accommodation, meals, home facilities just as they do for their own children
[Consideration needs to be given to such things as language differences, food, living habits, social attitudes, religion etc]

- provide, as far as possible, a "normal" Australian lifestyle
- greet and farewell the guest at the airport
- fit in with Venturer Unit activities
- fit in with certain fixed date activities planned by the Scout Association.
- Agree to the Scout Association undertaking a "Police Check" / Working with Children of adult members of the family.

4 Throughout the program host families and students will have the support, if required, of the Program Co-ordinator and appropriate Scout personnel, in dealing with problems that may occur.

5 Acceptance of the responsibility of hosting in no way implies any preferential obligation to accept, nor will it preclude the acceptance of, a host child for a future exchange.

This program, which is the first of its kind directed purely to Scouts, is proving to be a great success. We have a wonderful reputation throughout the Scouting world as a host nation. This we aim to build on and expand. The contribution of our host families is critical. The lifestyle and opportunities they offer, the attitude expressed in the home, the Venturer Unit, the Scout Group, the school and the local community will be remembered for a lifetime by both the visitor and the hosts. It is a wonderful challenge and opportunity. Thank you for giving it your consideration.

Objectives of the Program

As Scouts:

- 1 To further goodwill and understanding by enabling young people to study at first hand some of the problems and accomplishments in countries other than their own.
- 2 To enable students to advance their education by studying, for a short time, in an environment entirely different to their own and possibly experiencing subjects not available in their own schools.
- 3 To broaden the student's outlook, further than can be done at a Jamboree or Venture, by learning to live with and meet people of other cultures, creeds and colours in their own country: and by having to cope with day to day problems in an environment so different to that of their home.
- 4 To experience Scouting in another country.
- 5 To act as Ambassadors for their country by their manners and attitude, by addressing Scout and community organizations and other youth groups in the host country and by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their own country to people they meet while they are away.
- 6 To study as many facets of life as possible in the host country so that on return they can pass on the knowledge gained by addressing their school, Scouts, youth groups and community organizations.

Incoming students are selected by their own Association's general guidelines. It is hoped that notification and details of incoming students will be received here during April, and certainly no later than May, to allow planning for their arrival in June [U.K., Denmark] or July [Japan].

Students are away for between six and eight weeks as guests of a host family, Scout Group and school. During this time they will gain some insight into the lifestyle of their host country. Minimal school time is lost as all students give up their summer vacation to go to winter in the host country. Despite this, experience has shown that there are many different activities to be sampled and enjoyed.

Among the qualities being sought from selected Venturers are:

- * a balanced personality with an ability to think through problems and the ability to cope with the possible strains and stresses of living in another country, particularly one with a different lifestyle and language.
- * an ability to meet and relate to other people.
- * a high degree of maturity in thought and action.
- * an enquiring mind with an active interest in their local community, the world in general, and the world's problems.
- * a well developed knowledge of their country's geography, current affairs etc.
- * an ability to communicate and to express themselves clearly
- * an active involvement in their local community through sport, church, hobbies etc.
- * a well adjusted family relationship.
- * a sound academic record.

Host families are expected to be actively supportive of Scouting and should have a youth member in the Venturer section, preferably in Year 10 or 11, in the year of the incoming visit. The school of the host student

must be prepared to accept an incoming student for some six to eight weeks, as must the Venturer Unit and the Scout Group. Each of these local conditions needs to be met before the student can be placed. Great reliance is placed on each of the hosting bodies providing normal as well as "exciting" activities for their guest.

The host family, school and Scout Group will not make any charges. The host family incurs the cost of an extra "child" to shelter, feed, take on outings etc, for the time of the stay. The sending family pay airfares, passport and visa costs, medical and immunization charges, health and travel insurance, departure taxes and pocket money.

Getting Started.

- 1 Check with the Scout Group, and particularly the Venturer Unit, that they will support your application.
- 2 Check with whatever school you hope to involve, that they will accept an exchange student.
- 3 Obtain the necessary referees.
- 4 Complete the application form and Police Check form.

Once the application is approved there is usually a period of waiting for information to be forwarded from the overseas Scout Association. As soon as personal details arrive the "matching" process begins and a tentative allocation is made. As soon as this is firmed up the Program Co-ordinator notifies the sending Association and our Ministry of Education so that the "paper warfare" necessary for the issue of the appropriate "Student Visa" can begin.

At this stage both families should be looking to make contact by whatever means they see fit. Photos of family members, the house, pets etc are always a good start.

Unless there are special circumstances the incoming student can expect to stay with the one family throughout. Visitors should remember that they are not an honoured guest deserving of special treatment or consideration, they are a member of their host family. This will call for differing degrees of adjustment from each exchangee as **they must fit into the life of the host family**. There is no obligation on the hosts to make any adjustments whatsoever, it must all be done by the exchangee. The host family owes the visitor nothing, but the exchangee owes a considerable debt of gratitude and co-operation for the amount of personal and financial sacrifice incurred by the hosts.

Schooling

A condition of a family being accepted for hosting is that arrangements can be made for the visitor to **attend school with one of the host family**. The potential hosts should make the initial contact with the school to ensure that this is possible. Most schools are quite willing participate. Whatever educational background is supplied by the sending country, it is forwarded to parents to pass on (or direct if preferred) to the school so that some form of program / subject arrangements can be made.

Once the school has indicated willingness to be involved the Co-ordinator will make contact to confirm that all is well and provide any additional information. Regular contact is maintained throughout the visit.

The visitor is expected to attend school regularly, but where special circumstances arise that provide an opportunity to add interest to the visit, these should receive full consideration. The Scout Association, the family, a family friend, may well have a special event or activity which will clash with a day or so. The decision as to what to do should be the result of mutual discussion.

Advisor

The local Scout Program Co-ordinator should be the first point of reference should an exchangee or host need assistance or advice regarding any aspect of the stay that causes concern.

Financial Obligations

Parents of an outward exchange student are required to undertake the following:

[1] the cost of transport of the student to and from the host country and any administration charge as determined by the Scout Association. The return fare must be paid in full before the student leaves.

[2] the provision of a current passport and necessary visas or entry documents.

[3] the provision of adequate "day to day pocket money".

[4] have in place arrangements for access to contingency funds so that the student is not put in the position of having to borrow money from the host family.

[5] the provision of all necessary clothing, suitable to the climate and season of the host country. This must include a full Scout uniform. **Whether a school uniform is required needs to be checked with the host family.**

[6] personal presentations and, where necessary, departure taxes. (Departure taxes for Australia and the U.K. are incorporated in the cost of the airline ticket.)

Spending Money

The amount of spending money is entirely a matter for the sending family. Past experience shows that a workable amount averages between \$100 and \$150 a week! Spending will be at the visitor's discretion but a weekly budget will help keep control. Hosts may feel it wise to oversee operations if they are allowed.

Visitors should have been asked to see that every possible step is taken to ensure that hosts are not placed in a position of financial embarrassment. If there are problems talk to your guest and the Co-ordinator.

Remember they are away on their own and they are responsible. This can be quite a challenge and a very valuable part of the program.

Remember to point out the need for some money for use on the return trip.

Hosting Expenses

Hosts must accept that the exercise will involve quite a degree of extra demand on the household budget. Firstly there is an extra body to feed. There will certainly be the costs of extra travel, visits, admissions etc.

Hosts should not ask for or expect any payment for any "service" they provide.

Making Contact

Host families will be informed at the earliest possible date of the details of the guest and information may also be available for use of the school. The availability of email is speeding up the contact procedure and allowing an increasing amount of information to be exchanged. It is still strongly recommended that "voice" contact also be made. Experience has shown that early family contact between host and guest is invaluable for both families. The senders tend to feel more comfortable if they have spoken to the hosts. [It may be a little more difficult, but this is also true for the Japanese]

Helpful information regarding suitable clothing, whether a school uniform is needed, contact details for mail, phone/fax, and most important details of your family are all appreciated. Put yourself in the position of the sending family and think of all the things that you would want to know.

Corresponding

The use of telephone or fax facilities is a matter of mutual agreement. The sending parents always appreciate a phone call announcing safe arrival. Skype or email is a means of quick and inexpensive communication.

Guidelines for Students.

The Australian application form requires the signing of an undertaking by both the student and parents to accept the necessary constraints that may be imposed. These points apply equally to all visitors.

Rules that must be Accepted

Laws of the Country. These must be obeyed. Being a "foreigner" and ignorant is no excuse. Talk to your guests early in their stay to point out the common "do's and don'ts". Please ensure that they understand that they do not place themselves or you in an embarrassing situation.

Drugs. The use or handling of illegal drugs is also breaking the laws of the country; but it needs special mention. If caught, the least thing that can happen is immediate deportation; the worst jail. Drugs can be offered in many ways, particularly by peers. Youth hosts should be particularly alert in this regard and take whatever action may be needed to protect their guest.

Driving. Visitors should not be allowed to drive any motorised vehicle.

School. School attendance is an integral part of the exchange. Fullest possible participation is expected. Guests will find great differences in the school system, hours, and work requirements. Taking the fullest

possible part in all opportunities offered can be a great exercise in self-development. The host school must have the final say in whether a school uniform is needed. Host families are asked to check this and let the visitor's family know.

Drinking of Alcohol Youth members are under 18 years of age and should not be drinking alcohol whilst on this exchange program.

Smoking Is actively discouraged by the Scout Association. ALL Scout premises are "smoke free" zones. If your exchangee wishes to smoke you must explain the law in our country, and he / she should most certainly have your permission. It may also be wise to check with the exchangees family.

The Exchangees Arrival

Where possible, host families are expected to be available to meet their guest at the airport. In the case of hosts who live outside a reasonable range suitable alternative arrangements will be made.

Regardless the country of origin, the exchangee is going to feel strange and possibly insecure. In most cases the flight has been long and tiresome [Japan 12hrs+, U.K. Denmark 24hrs+] so they will also be tired.

Minimum formalities will occur with the State Co-ordinator.

Make your introductions quickly and quietly. [Some may well have to be repeated after a recuperative rest.]

Introduce yourselves in the way you wish to be known for the duration of the stay.

After you leave the airport the choices are yours. You will know your own needs regarding meals; do you need a breakfast, supper etc. Does your exchangee need anything? Is your exchangee able to cope with a quick sightseeing tour? etc.

When you reach home you will again need to assess the situation with regard to food and rest. Provide your exchangee a tour of your home then allow your exchangee some time space / free time.

Ground Rules

Explain your "ground rules" soon after arrival, regarding such things as use of facilities, phone calls, the homework schedule of youth members, visitors and visiting.

The last few points have been mentioned as points of concern, when the exchangee may not feel so committed to homework and has offers of other activities that interfere with your own family's needs. Naturally the exchangee will want to do as many things as possible in a short time and so be tempted to be on the go all the time. You could well point out that a key aspect of the visit is to experience family life, especially with you!

Check up on any dietary needs, medication etc. Discuss the exchangee's financial arrangements: cashing travellers' cheques (if they have brought them), banking (visiting the appropriate ATM), budgeting of spending money etc [Remember some of these young people may never had had such responsibility before.]

Co-ordinators need to be asked and permission sought before exchangees go and stay with other families. (This also includes previous exchangees that they may have stayed with.)

Language

Where exchangees are from a non-English speaking background, hosts need to be aware that, for most of our exchangees, the opportunity to practice their English is a feature of the trip. Some may speak quite fluently, others will have minimal skills. The latter will take a great deal of patience to handle but will be very rewarding to both parties. Phrase books and dictionaries will come in for maximum use and handled the right way this can be a lot of fun. In all cases make an effort to learn something of the visitor's language too. This is always appreciated. Experience has shown that the Japanese, nearly all of whom learn English at school, have a better grasp of the written rather than the spoken word.

Travel & Events

The host family, Unit or Scout Group are not obliged to take the guest anywhere. Exchangees will probably not be expected to pay for visits and outings but they should certainly be prepared to offer. It must be left to the hosts to decide whether to accept some contribution. An occasional acceptance allows for a form of "thank you".

If during the stay there will be travel well outside the host neighbourhood, or the undertaking of an event with more than the usual degree of risk, [eg hang gliding, scuba diving, flying, etc], it should only be after **written permission** has been given by:

- the exchangee's family - this may necessitate some emails, faxes, phone calls etc
- the local State Exchange Co-ordinator
- the host family

Luggage Limitation

Host families are asked to remind exchangees that on most flights the luggage limitation on international flights is 20kg plus a carry-on bag of about 5kg. For many this may require careful planning to maintain this limit, as there are often many 'little extras' that have been acquired. Excess luggage can be extremely expensive .

Health Insurance

Exchangees are expected to have Insurance through their own Scout Association which covers travel and accident.

Departure

This can be a time of mixed feelings. There is the excitement of going home as well as the sadness of leaving the 'other family', many new friends and Australia. Be prepared to experience some very strong emotions.

Exchangees may be tempted to ask for an extension of their stay. This is not encouraged. (It could affect Visa / Entry permit, health cover conditions and the Scout Association would not remain involved.)

Host families are asked to assist exchangees to reconfirm their home flights.

Homesicknesses

Even though exchangees won't be away for long, they may find that this feeling catches up with them. It is nothing new and can be overcome. When the initial excitement of arrival has subsided and life takes on something of a routine many of the ways and habits of may be start to be missed.

Signs?

- * Despondency for no apparent reason.
- * Upsets brought on by normally trivial matters.
- * Unfavourable comparisons being made with home.
- * A desire to stay alone somewhere - a secure little world.

Physical symptoms?

- * Headaches
- * Loss of appetite
- * Tummy upsets
- * Uneven menstrual cycle etc

What to do

- * Recognise that these are very normal signs of homesickness.
- * Talk and try to share the problem. Let them know that you are aware that all is not well and that they are probably not their normal self.
- * Keep them busy and don't allow time for being miserable.
- * Get them to write letters home / email telling of all the GOOD things.

Please DO NOT.

- * Allow them to sit around moping. Gloominess and misery are contagious.
- * Allow them to try and eat their way back to happiness. That way they may well put on weight, clothes won't fit, they become all upset and miserable and begin the cycle again.
- * Consider any request to go home at the first sign. In a VERY RARE case it may be an answer, but it is very much the last resort.

Problem Situations

Over the period of a visit there is always the possibility of strain, concern, or at the worst conflict and incompatibility of the visitor and the host. In most cases honest and frank discussion will present a solution. At the beginning of the visit hosts should explain to their guest that if either party feels in any way uncomfortable about any aspect of their stay e.g.:

- * relationship with the household
- * school problems
- * the host Venturer Unit etc

a discussion should be initiated. At the same time the State Program Co-ordinator should be informed of the problem and kept up to date with progress.

Where either party feels uncomfortable about approaching the problem with the other, the Co-ordinator should be informed and immediately take all necessary steps to resolve the problem.

Where a solution suitable to both parties cannot be reached the Co-ordinator will arrange for any necessary changes to be made. Throughout any "dispute" the Co-ordinator will keep overseas parents / guardians, and the Scout Association fully informed. Where a situation may have legal implication the Co-ordinator will call on the services of legal representatives of the Scout Association.

While it is not expected that any great problems will arise, due to the relatively short stay of our overseas visitors, the following is offered if needed. The format and procedure are suggestions only and are in no way binding. The extent to which these or similar steps are followed will of necessity depend on the magnitude of the problem. **In all cases the State Program Co-ordinator should be informed that a problem exists.**

The Process

STEP 1 PREPARE.

- 1.1 Work out your perception of the problem and what specific result you hope to gain from the other person.
- 1.2 Know EXACTLY what concerns you.
- 1.3 Think about how the other person might react.
- 1.4 Prepare a strategy - how you will handle the problem and the person.

STEP 2 DISCUSS

- 2.1 Initiate the discussion in a quiet, rational manner, in a suitable place at a reasonable time. If feelings are running high allow for a break before going on to deal with detail. Describe your concerns and feelings. Ask for questions to clarify.
- 2.2 Listen to the other person. Again use questions to be sure you understand their point of view.
- 2.3 Be aware of your "body language". Don't let it conflict with what you are saying and meaning.
- 2.4 Summarise points that have been made on both sides to ensure understanding.
- 2.5 Avoid attacking, sarcasm, blaming, shouting or threatening.

STEP 3 PROPOSE

- 3.1 Suggest ideas for a solution. Allow time for thought.
- 3.2 Invite a response.
- 3.3 Suggest possible amendments.
- 3.4 Always listen to the other person's point of view.
- 3.5 Use phrases such as: "What if . ?" "Could we ..?" "Maybe .."
- 3.5 Try to come to a point where you both agree on an idea.

STEP 4 BARGAIN

- 4.1 Try to come up with a "win - win" situation. Nobody likes to be a loser.
- 4.2 Use phrases like "If you ... then I ..."
- 4.3 Make sure the goal is specific, and make any conditions known before any offer is made.
- 4.4 Keep talking until you are both happy with the solution.
- 4.5 Ensure both parties understand what has to be done.
- 4.6 Set a time to come back for a review.

STEP 5 NOTIFY

- 5.1 The Program Co-ordinator of success or failure.

If there has not been a resolution THEN

STEP 6 THE National and State Co-ordinators will take over the responsibility for further action by:

- 6.1 Initiating individual and / or group discussions.
- 6.2 Notifying, where warranted, Host and Sending Scout Associations.
- 6.3 Introducing, if necessary, specialist counsellors / negotiators.
- 6.4 Maintaining a record of all proceedings.

Both Scout Associations will be kept fully informed throughout proceedings.