

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

STUDENT GUIDE TO PREPARE FOR STUDY IN VICTORIA

Melbourne, Australia
Department of Education



Welcome to Melbourne and Victoria

CONGRATULATIONS

Choosing a Victorian government school has opened an exciting window into your future and soon we will welcome you in person. This guide has information to help you get ready to travel and prepare for study in Victoria. Even though the information is mostly for you, your parents will also find this guide helpful and reassuring.

You might have already collected some information – perhaps about your new school, city of Melbourne highlights or living in Victoria. We want you to feel secure and happy from the moment you arrive. So, inside you'll find lots of useful tips about student life in Victoria and what to expect when you get here. There are also handy details like websites and phone numbers.

You're about to take an important step in life. We hope you find this guide helpful in getting to know your new school and home.

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This document is also available on the internet at www.study.vic.gov.au



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Getting ready

There are important things you should arrange before you travel to Victoria. This section includes information, a packing guide and two pre-travel checklists to help you get away smoothly.

WHAT TO BRING

Before you pack, check with your airline about luggage size and weight limits. If you will be staying with a homestay family, don't forget to put a copy of your Arrival Support Form in your hand luggage with your travel documents.

Clothing and personal items

Victoria has varied seasonal weather, so you'll need clothing to suit. Don't forget personal care and any uniform items you are bringing.

If you are staying in homestay accommodation, you won't need many household items. It's a good idea to pack photos of family and friends, favourite music or a small reminder of home.

Medicine

If you need regular medicine for a medical condition (like diabetes, asthma or eczema), pack this along with a letter from your doctor and your medical history.

Money

If you are not travelling with family, it's a good idea to bring about AUD\$400 in cash for unexpected or immediate expenses.

You can change foreign currency at the airport, shopping district currency exchanges or at any bank.

Can I bring food?

Australia has very strict rules about bringing food and other items like traditional medicine, plants and organic material into the country, in order to protect our environment. In many cases, these types of items will be confiscated at the airport, so you should try to avoid bringing them with you, and always declare what you do bring on your Incoming Passenger Card. Australian Border Force officers at the airport can advise you on what you can bring and what you should declare.

If you do decide to bring something you are uncertain about, make sure you declare it on your Incoming Passenger Card or ask a Border Force officer. Your bags will be screened at the airport, and sniffer dogs may be used to check your luggage for food and other prohibited items.

Most international foods will be available in Victoria, and your school's International Student Coordinator (ISC) can help you find the food you need after you arrive.

For more information on the food items you can bring to Australia, see: abf.gov.au/entering-and-leaving-australia/can-you-bring-it-in



BEFORE YOU PACK



Your Passport

Check your passport's expiry date and ensure it's valid for the full length of your student visa. Make two printed copies of your passport and visa. Bring one printed copy with you, but keep it separate from the originals. Leave the second printed copy at home with your family. You may also want to take a photo with your phone of your passport and visa, so you have a digital copy as well. Taking these precautions will help in case you lose the originals.



Booking flights

Wait until your student visa has been issued and tuition fees are paid before making travel plans. You should book flights to Melbourne or Avalon Airport soon after this.

If you will be staying in homestay, once your flights are booked your parents or education agent will be required to complete the Flight Details Form and email it to the Department of Education (the department) so that the International Student Coordinator (ISC) at your new school can plan for your arrival.



Timing your arrival

To help you settle in, it is best to arrive up to one week before school begins. You must arrive before the first day of the school term (depending on your start date). Your parents should write to the department if you cannot arrive in time.

Note: To meet host family needs and visa requirements, homestay students should not arrive earlier than one week before the first day of school.



Your health

Your medical history is important to consider when travelling to Victoria. You should check the Australian Department of Home Affairs health requirements before leaving home. For more information on health requirements, see: immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/health

Ask your doctor for a letter that includes the technical name of, and reason for, any medicine you are planning to bring or may need to buy in Australia. A documented medical history will ensure you get proper care in an emergency.



Personal insurance

You should take out travel insurance in case you need medical care on your way to Australia. You will also need to arrange Overseas Student Health Cover as part of your enrolment process.

The department can arrange health cover for you and the application form included this choice. If you asked for health cover, speak to your ISC once you arrive at school to arrange for your health insurance card to be sent to your home or school. Your insurance starts one week before your course start date, even if you don't have the card yet. This medical insurance provides basic cover, so make sure you understand any limits or conditions. Extended health insurance can be arranged once you arrive in Victoria. Your ISC will help you with this, if required.

For more information on Overseas Student Health Cover, see: studyinaustralia.gov.au/english/live-in-australia/insurance



Banking

It's important to tell your current bank that you are about to travel and arrange to either access money in Australia or make charges in foreign currency. Your ISC or homestay family can help you set up a bank in Australia when you arrive.



Mobile or cell phones

Ask your mobile phone or cell call carrier if your phone will work in Australia. You might need a new SIM or handset to use while you're here.



School uniform

You can go to school on your first day in casual clothes. Your ISC will give you uniform information, after you arrive, as part of the orientation. You may find it cost effective to bring some items with you (e.g. black leather lace-up shoes).



Customs and quarantine

The Australian Border Force has strict rules about what you can bring into Australia. These include how much money you can carry, vitamins and medicines (pharmacy or natural/traditional), food items, animal products and pets.

For an online guide to Australian customs requirements, see: immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/entering-and-leaving-australia/entering-australia



Returning home

You must stay in Victoria until one day after the school term ends. Your parents should write to the department if you need to leave earlier than this.



PRE-TRAVEL CHECKLISTS

Getting ready to travel

- ✓ Student visa issued and any conditions noted
- ✓ Passport current until your student visa expires
- ✓ Copies of your passport and visa stored safely and left with family
- ✓ Flight booked to arrive before the start of term (no earlier than one week for homestay students)
- ✓ Department and school notified of arrival details so someone can meet you at the airport (homestay students only)
- ✓ Medical history and doctor's letter obtained if needed
- ✓ Travel and medical insurance arranged
- ✓ Bank alerted you will be making transactions in Australia
- ✓ Mobile phone service availability and charges in Australia checked
- ✓ Uniform information found on school website

What to pack

- ✓ Luggage compliant with your airline's size and weight limits
- ✓ Travel documents and Arrival Support Form (for homestay students) in hand luggage
- ✓ Any standard school uniform items (e.g. black shoes)
- ✓ Suitable clothing for Victoria's seasonal climate
- ✓ Medical history, doctor's letter and any regular medicine
- ✓ Copies of travel and medical insurance documents
- ✓ Around AUD\$400 in cash if you are not travelling with family
- ✓ A reminder of home, photos and favourite music
- ✓ No banned items

Victorian government school term dates

Term Dates	2024	2025	2026	2027
Term 1	29 January* – 28 March	28 January* – 4 April	27 January* – 2 April	27 January* – 25 March
Term 2	15 April – 28 June	22 April – 4 July	20 April – 26 June	12 April – 25 June
Term 3	15 July – 20 September	21 July – 19 September	13 July – 18 September	12 July – 17 September
Term 4	7 October – 20 December	6 October – 19 December	5 October – 18 December	4 October – 17 December

*The first day of Term 1 is a student-free day in Victorian government schools to allow for planning to take place for the arrival of students. Please confirm your required start date with your ISC.



When you arrive

This section of the guide is about what to expect when you first get here. Your ISC will help you settle in to home and school life. There are lots of things to organise, but don't worry if you're not sure what to do. You'll have plenty of help.

ARRIVAL

Getting ready to land in Melbourne is exciting. Make sure to listen to any information the airline gives you about Australian customs and immigration, so you can pass through the airport quickly.

At the airport

We understand our homestay students need a little extra support when they first arrive in Australia, including being met at the airport. Make sure the Arrival Support Form is packed in your hand luggage if you will be living with a homestay family. The Arrival Support Form tells you who will greet you at Melbourne or Avalon Airport and where to meet them. Your homestay address and an emergency phone number are also included in case there are any problems.

See page 29 for more information about the arrivals process for homestay students.

Phoning home

You'll probably want to phone family or friends back at home when you first arrive in Australia. If your mobile or cell phone carrier has service from Australia, you may like to use your own handset. If you are staying in a homestay, ask your homestay family about accessing the WiFi or using their landline phone.

Accessing money

If you need money when you first arrive, it's easiest to use your bank or credit card. Almost all Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) in Australia accept 'PLUS', 'Maestro' and 'Cirrus' cards. Check your card for one of these internationally recognised logos.

It is a vital part of my role to make students feel comfortable, safe and happy. I meet with every student when they arrive and tell them they can ring me anytime about any concerns. I know all the homestay families and together we help students understand local transport, banking and shops. The student is taken to their English language centre on the first day, and they usually make friends very quickly. Later I help students confirm their subject selection, buy their school uniform and books.

It is important for students to know they can ask questions and everyone is willing to help! If it's difficult to speak and understand the Aussie language at first, I can always find a translator.

– **Cathy Di Battista**
International Student Coordinator
Strathmore Secondary College

THINGS TO ORGANISE

Keeping in touch

Even if your mobile or cell phone has service, it will be more cost effective to purchase an Australian SIM card. You can do this at most supermarkets and shopping centres.

The easiest way to stay in touch is via Whatsapp, WeChat, Skype, Viber, Facetime or something similar over the WiFi internet at your homestay or via your phone's data package when you are not at home.

International call cards are also easy to buy. They allow you to make cheap international phone calls.

If you are living in a homestay, your homestay family may also agree to you repaying them for international calls made from a landline phone. Even so, it is still best to ask every time you use the landline phone to avoid misunderstandings.

When someone from home wants to contact you in Australia, they should use the 00 11 61 prefix to call from a landline, or the +61 prefix to call from a mobile. When calling from overseas, there's no need to dial the zero (0) before the Victorian area code or your mobile number. So, anyone outside Australia should dial:
(00 11 or +) 61 3 (eight digit local number) to call a Victorian landline number, or
(00 11 or +) 61 (nine digits, starting with 4) to call your mobile.

There is also an online tool that can help at timeanddate.com/worldclock/dialing.html?p2=152

Moving around

Victoria's public transport system uses electronic prepaid ticketing. If you will be travelling by train, tram or bus, you will need a Child myki card. These are sold at train stations, retail outlets and online. There is more information on public transport later in this guide.

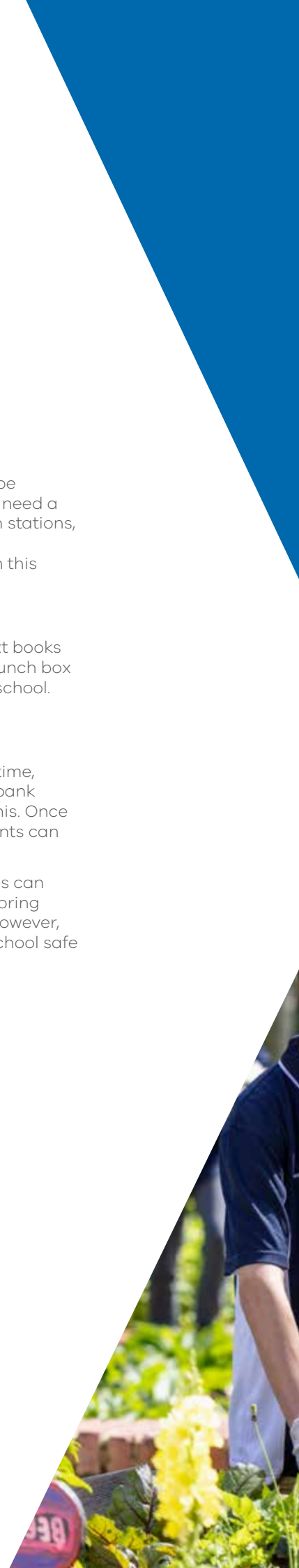
School supplies

You'll need to buy a school uniform, text books and other school supplies (like a bag, lunch box or stationery) soon after you arrive at school. Your ISC will help you with this.

Your bank account

You will be in Victoria for an extended time, so you may like to open an Australian bank account. Your ISC can help you to do this. Once your account is open, you or your parents can transfer money from home.

If you plan to get a part-time job, wages can be paid into it as well. It's better not to bring large amounts of cash into Australia; however, if you do, your ISC can put this in the school safe until you open a bank account.





WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT I WAS COMING TO AUSTRALIA I WAS EXCITED! IT HAD BEEN MY DREAM EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID AND IT FINALLY BECAME TRUE.

I FELT LIKE I WAS VERY LUCKY! FITTING INTO THE NEW SCHOOL AND MAKING FRIENDS ARE EASY IF YOU DON'T TAKE THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY, AS AUSTRALIANS TEND TO BE QUITE EASY GOING AND THEY JOKE A LOT.

**- Katlyn (Thi Hoang Anh) Nguyen
Victorian international student graduate**



Life in Victoria and Melbourne

Victoria is well known for embracing different cultures and students like you are a big part of that. You probably already know Melbourne is a thriving modern city where you'll be able to enjoy lots of different interests and activities. This part of the guide has information about what it's like to live in Melbourne and Victoria. We've included some websites where you can get extra information too.

LIFESTYLE AND CULTURE

Entertainment, activities and fun

You are coming to Victoria for a quality education, but your time here can also be fun and exciting. Your school friends and homestay family will want you to share in many fun activities nearby and across Victoria. Your new friends may be active outdoors (e.g. bike riding and swimming) or enjoy eating out, watching movies or exploring the city. Make sure you join a sports team, local church, music or drama group. Victorians are also passionate about the Australian Football League (AFL) and may eagerly encourage you to attend a match or choose a team to follow.

Multicultural, safe and friendly community

Melbourne is one of Australia's most multicultural cities with a long history of embracing people from every race and nation, and more than half of Victorians have a direct family link overseas. All schools value and respect individual and cultural diversity, and you will be able to stay connected with home through cultural activities both inside and outside school. Countless people enjoy taking part in events like Lunar New Year, Diwali Indian Festival of Light, Pako Festa, Easter Festival and Cultural Diversity Week. It sometimes seems like there is a festival every week!

Victoria's student cities

Centres for tourism, agriculture and industry feature among Victoria's many progressive student cities. The people who live in these communities are open, friendly and make newcomers feel welcome.

Victoria offers a thriving modern culture and a wide choice of activities outside school. Its people are sociable and relaxed but also enthusiastic about their passions. Victorians are well known for their love of world food, arts, culture, sport and indoor or outdoor activities.



CLIMATE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Personal safety

Victoria is a friendly, safe and multicultural community. You'll find Melbourne clean, quiet and welcoming. No matter how small your question, if you're ever concerned ask a teacher, your homestay family or your ISC. They're all there to help you feel safe and happy. You'll also have access to student support services, including emergency phone numbers.

The sun and surf are enjoyable for visitors and locals alike but can also be risky. You should always be careful to protect your skin, especially at the beach or pool. The Australian sun can be very hot in summer and, unlike other countries, the Ultra Violet (UV) index may be high throughout the year. Long-sleeved clothing, sunscreen and a hat are important, especially during the hottest part of the day.

Always choose a patrolled surf beach for swimming, where lifesavers are on duty. If you can't swim, tell your homestay family or the friends who invite you to the pool or beach so they can keep you safe. There's more information about beach safety online at beachsafe.org.au

Time difference

Victoria is within the Australian Eastern Standard Time GMT+10 (AEST) international time zone. In the warmer months of the year, clocks are moved forward by one hour for Daylight Saving. You can find out the time difference any time of year at timeanddate.com/worldclock

Public holidays

Victorian public holidays are published online at business.vic.gov.au/victorian-public-holidays-and-daylight-saving/victorian-public-holidays

Working in Victoria

Your international student visa lets you work part-time while you study. If you decide to take a part-time or casual job, you must begin your studies before starting work.

Working outside of school hours can affect your studies. Please speak with your ISC before you apply for a job so you can settle into a study routine and continue to focus on your studies.

We recommend you only work on weekends, leaving week nights free

for homework and study. Your ISC can help you get an Australian Tax File Number. Any reputable employer will need this information before you can start work. 'Cash-in-hand' or 'off-the-books' jobs are illegal and leave you without proper protection, so don't accept this type of work. Speak to your ISC immediately if you are worried about your working conditions or if anything happens that you feel is not right.

Visits from home

Your parents are welcome to visit while you are studying here. Tell your ISC if your family plans to visit. They can suggest any special dates at school your parents might like to attend. Your ISC will know the hotels and apartments close to school.

Food and water

Students bring their own lunch, snacks and a reusable water bottle to school, that they refill from taps during the day. There will be a microwave at your school if you bring food that needs to be heated.

Tap water in Australia is completely safe to drink so there is no need to purchase bottled water.

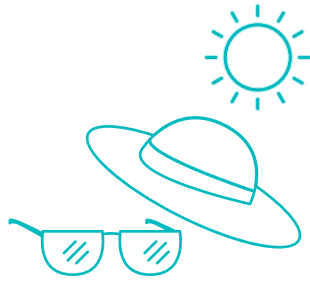


School and casual clothing

Most schools have a uniform or dress standard that you will need to wear to classes, school events and sport days. You may also need to wear a uniform if you take a part-time job. Outside of school and work, clothing is your own personal choice. Australians are accepting of other cultures, so you'll often see people from other countries dress according to their culture or religion.

Summer essentials:

- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- T-shirts
- Skirts/shorts
- Light jacket/sweater



Winter essentials:

- Winter coat
- Jumpers
- Gloves
- Scarf
- Covered shoes



Weather and locations

Compared to many places, the Victorian climate is mild and comfortable. Weather can change quickly, sometimes more than once a day. Below is a chart of average daily maximum temperatures. These vary by location, e.g. closer to the mountains will naturally be cooler. You can find more Victorian weather information at the Bureau of Meteorology website: bom.gov.au/vic

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Average maximum temperature (°C)											
25.9	25.8	23.9	20.3	16.7	14.1	13.5	15.0	17.2	19.7	22.0	24.2
Average minimum temperature (°C)											
14.3	14.6	13.2	10.8	8.6	6.9	6.0	6.7	8.0	9.5	11.2	12.9
Average rainfall (mm)											
47.6	48.0	50.4	57.3	55.8	49.0	47.5	50.0	58.1	66.4	60.4	59.5

Seasonal climate

Victoria's mild climate offers plenty of opportunity for outdoor activity and an active, healthy lifestyle. Like all countries in the southern hemisphere, Australia's seasons follow the sequence:

Summer:	December to February	Autumn:	March to May
Winter:	June to August	Spring:	September to November

TRANSPORT AND GETTING AROUND

You'll find Melbourne simple to get around using the excellent public transport system.

A network of trains, trams and buses gives you access to school, home, the city centre and other popular places. V/Line trains and buses make your travel connections between Melbourne and around Victoria easy. You could also walk, ride a bike or travel in your homestay family's car.

Ride your way around town

You can use our extensive network of dedicated, safe bike paths when you're living in Victoria. Mix and match a train trip with a bike ride – you can take your bike on the train. Just make sure to always wear a helmet as it's a legal requirement in Australia.

Our famous trams

Melbourne's trams are part of the city's unique character. They're a great way to explore the central business district and inner suburbs. We have the largest tram network in the world, with over 500 trams and 25 different routes. They travel along most of the city's major roads and their routes extend out into the suburbs.

Heritage trams run on the free City Circle route, especially for visitors to Melbourne. Trams run on many of the major roads in the inner suburbs, but only some run on roads in middle and outer suburbs.

The central city train network

The city has a central train system (called the City Loop) that is partly underground. There are five stations in the city centre: Flinders Street, Parliament, Melbourne Central, Flagstaff and Southern Cross.

There are 16 different train lines to the outer suburbs. Trains run from around 5am until after midnight on most lines. On Friday and Saturday nights, trains and some trams operate throughout the night.

Regional trains to country Victoria

V/Line is Victoria's regional rail network. It will take you to all the main tourist attractions across the state. It connects to regional cities in Victoria and also to the other Australian states.

How to travel on public transport?

To travel in Victoria you will need to purchase a **myki** or **Child myki card**. This card will enable you to travel on buses, trains and tram services. The myki card system conveniently allows you to top up your myki card with money at most train stations, newsagents and convenience stores. You can also set up an account to pay online, and 'touch on' to transport using an app on your phone instead of a physical card.

It is important to remember in Melbourne the public transport network is divided into two zones according to the distance from the city centre. The price of your trip will depend on the:

- zone(s) in which you want to travel
- time period for your ticket (two hours, daily, weekly, monthly, annual).

All public transport users aged between 5 and 18 years (under 19) can purchase a Child myki and pay a concession fare.

This applies to anyone aged 18 years and under, including international students and tourists provided that they can demonstrate they are aged 18 years or under.

Customers aged 17 and 18 must carry government-issued proof of age identification (such as a Victorian driver licence, learner permit, Proof of Age card or passport), or proof of another concession entitlement (such as a PTV School Student ID) at all times when travelling on public transport. No proof of age is required for children aged 16 and under.

For further information see: ptv.vic.gov.au/tickets/myki/concessions-and-free-travel/children-and-students/children





Studying and living in Victoria

You've probably already researched the many advantages of studying in Victoria. This section gives you an idea of what being a student here will actually be like. You'll also find more information on these important subjects at: study.vic.gov.au/en/study-in-victoria/pages/default.aspx

VICTORIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Victorian school system has a reputation for a diverse curriculum, dedicated teachers and for bringing out the best in everyone. Your school will keep in regular contact with your parents so they'll know about your progress

Learning spaces

The classroom is wherever a teacher thinks students will learn best. Typically, students move from classroom to classroom, rather than staying in one room. You may find teachers use a variety of learning spaces, even a park, zoo, museum or gallery. You will learn independently and in group situations, both in the classroom and outside class time (e.g. homework and exam study).

Classroom teaching is interactive and exciting and you will find yourself learning in many different ways. In the classroom you'll have the chance to join energetic discussions, ask lots of questions and enjoy the positive support of others.

Education program and assessment

In Victoria, your course of study is taught according to school 'years' of learning. From Prep to Year 10, you will learn under the Victorian Curriculum F-10. Students in Years 11 and 12 study the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Assessments monitor your progress throughout the year, with exams at the end of Years 10, 11 and 12. Your school will also offer a choice of extra-curricular activities and experiences, such as excursions and various sport and musical activities. Make sure you get involved in these as this is the best way to make friends and improve your spoken English and confidence.

Students and teachers

You may find Victorian classrooms more relaxed than your last school. Even though your teachers will be friendly and approachable, the student-teacher relationship is still based on respect. You will use the teacher's title and surname (e.g. Dr, Ms, Mr or Mrs Jones) while teachers will call you by your first name.

Your teachers will support, challenge and inspire you. They are easy to talk to and will treat you with respect. Teachers will always help if there's something you don't understand. Your ISC will give you any extra support you need, for both your school and home life.

Reports on your progress

Most schools invite parents living in Australia to parent-teacher interviews at least twice a year. If your parents are overseas, your school may arrange phone interviews, and some ISCs also travel to meet with parents overseas. Parents can also request a written translated school report. It's important to keep your school informed of your parent's/legal guardian's home address, phone number and email address, whether they are with you in Australia or overseas.

Your ISC is your family's first point of contact. Parents can call your school at any time to speak with them. The International Education Division can also be contacted by email at international@education.vic.gov.au

A typical school day

8:30am	Class begins
8:30am–9:25am	Teaching period 1
9:25am–10:15am	Teaching period 2
10:15am–10:45 am	Recess
10:45am–11:35am	Teaching period 3
11:35am–12:20pm	Teaching period 4
12:20pm–1:20pm	Lunch
1:20pm–2:10pm	Teaching period 5
2:10pm–3:00pm	Teaching period 6
3:00pm	Study support or home time

TAKING CARE OF YOUR HEALTH

While you are away from your home country it is still important to look after your health and wellbeing. This includes physical health, mental health and personal hygiene.

Physical health

Make your physical health a priority by staying active throughout your homestay experience.

Tips for staying physically fit:



Stay active: consider walking or cycling along our many safe bicycle routes instead of taking public transport where you can, or go for a run in your spare time. Speak to your homestay or school about the safest places to stay active.



Make positive food choices: fresh fruit and vegetables make a great snack and can help to improve your mental and physical health. Eating healthy will also help give you the energy to focus on your studies.



Join school sport: this is also a great way to learn about Australian culture and make some new friends. Victorian secondary schools offer many different sports and competitions, from social games at lunchtimes through to matches against other schools.

If you feel unwell, tell your homestay family and ISC and organise to see a doctor (please refer to the 'Seeing a doctor' section for more details).

Mental health

Living away from close family and friends, adapting to a new culture and keeping up with your studies can be very stressful.

Top tips to stay mentally well:

- Practise regular meditation or try yoga.
- Exercise regularly by playing sport or using your school's or local council's fitness centre.
- Don't overdo it: take regular study breaks, particularly while preparing for exams.
- Make sure you get a good night's sleep, at least eight hours, as often as possible.
- Take time to eat healthily and regularly.
- Spend time doing things that make you happy, like hanging out with friends, going to the movies or getting involved in your school's extra-curricular activities.

Getting help

If you do have any mental health concerns it is important to have a chat with someone that you trust. Contact your ISC, talk with your homestay family, or visit a mental health professional (refer to the 'See a doctor' section for more details).

Remember, your ISC is always there for you. You can contact them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Here are some mental health organisations you can contact:

eHeadspace

A website where young people can get general information on mental or confidentially speak with a qualified youth mental health professional

Web: headspace.org.au/eheadspace

Kids Helpline

A 24-hour telephone hotline service where you can confidentially speak with a counsellor and find mental health services in your local area.

Tel: 1800 55 1800

Personal hygiene

Good health means good hygiene.

Having clean hands will help keep you from getting sick. Wash your hands before you eat and after using the toilet, or when you cough or sneeze if you have a cold or flu.

Remember to shower at least once a day. The Australian climate is hot so taking a shower, wearing clean clothes and using a good deodorant is vital.

Female hygiene products are supplied free of charge at all Victorian government schools, and can also be easily purchased from all major supermarkets or pharmacies. These products may vary from your home country; for example, in Australia tampons do not come with applicators. If you have concerns about finding suitable sanitary products, talk to your homestay family or ISC.

Good oral hygiene is also important and will help you avoid dental decay. Don't forget to brush your teeth morning and night, and to floss. Visiting a dentist once every 6 months will help prevent any long-term damage.

Seeing a doctor: how to book an appointment

To make an appointment with a doctor you will need information about your Overseas Student Healthcare Cover, often known as OSHC.

When you enrolled with us you had two choices for arranging your OSHC. These are:

Option 1: your parents/legal guardian or education agent nominated to choose your student healthcare insurance company

Option 2: your parents/legal guardian or education agent asked the Department of Education to arrange OSHC on your behalf.

If you chose option 1, your parents/legal guardian or education agent will have the OSHC information. Make sure you bring this information with you when you travel to Australia.

If you chose option 2, your ISC will help you get this information when you arrive at your school.

When booking an appointment you are able to request a preferred doctor or the doctor's gender. It is also possible to find a doctor who speaks your native language. Contact your ISC or homestay family to help you find a doctor that suits your needs. Some schools even have doctors who visit schools once a week and provide a free service for students.

Your doctor is also able to help you with mental health concerns.

For more information on physical and mental health, you might want to check out this helpful website: youthcentral.vic.gov.au/advice-for-life/health



YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important that you know your rights and responsibilities. You have rights as a student and temporary resident of Australia which aim to protect you. You also have a number of responsibilities while studying and living in Australia that may be different from your home country.

Below are a few things you may wish to consider that will protect you and those around you.

Child Safety

You can expect to be safe and to feel safe, wherever you go and whatever you do. You can expect that adults at your school know how to keep you safe.

The Department of Education and Victorian government schools are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We demonstrate this commitment by providing information, support and processes to our students, staff and homestay families to provide for our students' safety and wellbeing, and to help create child safe environments appropriate for their diverse backgrounds.

If you feel unsafe or someone is making you feel uncomfortable or unhappy, or you just don't feel something is right, your school is required to protect you. Speak to your ISC, teacher, principal or homestay family as soon as you can. They will listen to your concerns and are required to take action under the law.

Bullying

Victorian schools are welcoming environments where respectful behaviour is expected, modelled and encouraged. Every Victorian school has a zero tolerance policy around bullying.

Bullying can be any harmful or aggressive behaviours. It can take the form of emotional, physical or online bullying, often known as cyber bullying.

What to do if you or someone around you is being bullied

If you are bullied at school it is important to speak to your ISC, teacher, principal or homestay family who will help manage the issue. Your school knows how to help you and staff are there to look after your wellbeing and ensure that you are ok.

Bully Stoppers

Bully Stoppers is a website where you can get more information or find someone to talk to confidentially. For more information, see: education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx

School rules

Every school has different rules to help ensure the happiness, safety and wellbeing of all students and staff. Your ISC will provide you with the school rules when you arrive. It is important to follow these rules so that everyone can have a good educational experience.

Drugs and alcohol

While you are away from home it is still important to behave in an acceptable manner. Remember that drinking, smoking and gambling under the age of 18 are illegal in Australia, and like in a lot of countries, drug use is also illegal.

For more information on your rights, see: youthcentral.vic.gov.au/advice-for-life/know-your-rights

Internet safety

Your school will provide you with information about safe internet and phone use. Be aware of cyber-crimes and scams. Sometimes scammers pretend to be government officials, retailers, couriers or even police officers online or on the phone. Contact your ISC, homestay family or parents if you think you have received a fake call, SMS/text or email. Look out for phone calls, SMS/texts or emails demanding that you:

- click on links
- pay money
- provide your bank or other personal details
- enter your usernames or passwords.

For more information, see: education.gov.au/international-education/resources/scams-targeting-chinese-students



EMERGENCIES AND CONCERNING SITUATIONS

An emergency can be an immediate risk to someone's health, life or property. Emergencies are rare, but it's still important to be prepared. A concerning situation could be getting lost on public transport or feeling unsafe. Below are a few general guidelines to follow if you are feeling uncomfortable or faced with an emergency.

If you are lost or feeling unsafe

If you are lost or feeling unsafe, or are concerned, you must call your ISC immediately. Your ISC is there to help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including on school and public holidays. There are contact details on the Student Safety Card your ISC gave you when you arrived in Victoria.

In case of emergencies

For all emergencies, life-threatening situations or serious injuries:

Dial: 000

Dial: 112 (from mobile, even if you have no signal or network connection).

If you are involved in an emergency, you must always notify your ISC, homestay family (if applicable), host school and parents/legal guardian of the situation. Please review the Health and Safety page of the International Student Program website for information on what to do during an emergency: study.vic.gov.au/en/living-in-victoria/health-and-safety/Pages/default.aspx

IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN AN EMERGENCY, YOU MUST ALWAYS NOTIFY YOUR ISC, HOMESTAY FAMILY (IF APPLICABLE), HOST SCHOOL AND PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE SITUATION.





Homestay Resource Kit

The following information is only for students who have selected to stay with a parent-nominated or school-sourced homestay family. This information does not apply to you if you have chosen to live with a parent or Department of Home Affairs approved relative.

YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME

We want you to have the best possible experience while you complete your studies in Australia. This includes making sure that you feel safe and secure throughout your homestay experience.

This guide will give you the resources to:



feel comfortable with your homestay family

Getting to know your homestay family

Homestay families are carefully selected by your school and some have been hosting international students for many years. You'll find your homestay family warm, welcoming and active in the local community. They will ensure you feel safe and happy so you can make the most of your time in Victoria. Your host family may even have children attending the same school as you.

You will be matched with a host family at least four weeks prior to your stay. Their details will be sent to your education agent or parent in a document called the Homestay Profile. This includes photographs of the homestay house and contact details for your homestay parents. It also includes the names and ages of everyone in the family, including any children or other students.

You may like to learn a little more about your homestay family, and even contact them, before arriving in Australia. Simply ask your ISC and they will help to arrange the best form of contact. You can find the contact details of your ISC in the Arrival Support Form which is sent at the same time as the Homestay Profile.



connect with the support you need to enjoy your time in Australia

What to expect from your homestay family

Your homestay family will provide you with:

- a safe, secure, welcoming place to live
- a household compliant with the Child Safe Standards
- a separate single room for your personal use
- three nutritious meals a day, seven days a week, with reasonable access to snacks and in accordance with the student's dietary and medical needs
- facilities – a bed, wardrobe, towels and linen
- utilities – gas, electricity, heating and water costs, internet
- cleaning services of common living areas
- the use of living areas within the residence
- study facilities – desk, study light, bookcase
- attendance at parent/teacher evenings on behalf of your parents.



get the most out of your Victorian homestay experience.

A typical homestay family

Australia is a culturally diverse country with many differences in family structure and background. There is no 'typical' Australian family, so there isn't really a typical homestay family.

Your homestay family may be quite different to your own family. They may also be a little different to your expectations and even not quite the same as the homestay families of other students in the program.

What every homestay family has in common is a commitment to providing a welcoming, safe home environment. Some students are surprised at the different types of families in Australia. Here are some things that may be different culturally from your home country.

- Your homestay family may be a single person or a couple, with or without children.
- Gender roles in the home are less prominent in Australia than in some other countries. Both parents might cook and/or clean, and children also help their parents around the house.
- Women often continue to work after having a family.
- Australia is a multicultural country and families will be made up of people from different nationalities.

Day-to-day living with your homestay family

The average weekday in an Australian family might be different from your home country. Some things about day-to-day life to consider.



Work hours vary but are often between the hours of 8:00am and 6:00pm.



School hours are usually between 8:30am and 3:00pm.



In the afternoons and evenings, many Australian children participate in activities such as sport or music lessons, and complete homework.



Many families will often eat dinner together (this may be at a dinner table, at the kitchen bench or even in front of the TV).

Weekend activities might also be different from what you are used to at home.



Children will often have extra-curricular activities such as language classes, sport or performing arts.



Families will do their housework, do grocery shopping and prepare for the week ahead.



Some families might go to visit relatives, friends or on outings to visit local tourist destinations.



Teenagers might spend their time shopping, going to the cinema or hanging out with friends.

We recommend that you get involved in these activities as a great way to get to know your homestay family and develop your English language skills.

What your homestay house will look like

You may live in a:



free-standing house



townhouse



apartment.

In many Australian homes the kitchen is often the centre of activity. Your homestay may also have a garden or a balcony.

Homestay family pets

Some homestay families will have pets such as:



a cat



a dog



rabbits



even chickens!

You will be advised of any pets at your homestay, before you arrive in Australia. If you have any concerns or pet allergies please let your ISC know as soon as possible.



WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU GET INVOLVED IN THESE ACTIVITIES AS A GREAT WAY TO GET TO KNOW YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY AND DEVELOP YOUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

Booking your flight to Australia

Your parents or education agent will be required to complete the department's Flight Details Form and send it with an English copy of your plane ticket to the department four weeks before you expect to arrive in Australia. Providing the Flight Details Form will help the school to prepare for your arrival.

Arriving in Australia

The department is not responsible for your welfare more than seven days before your studies commence. Please do not arrive at your homestay before this time.

Arrival times

Please ensure your expected arrival time is between 6am and 8pm.

Pick up and drop off

When you arrive in Melbourne your ISC or a member of staff from your host school will be at the airport to greet you. They may also be accompanied by a member of your homestay family.

You will receive an Arrival Support Form before you leave your home country. This will include:

- the name of your host school
- the name of the person who will pick you up from the airport
- your host school representative's mobile number
- a physical description of the host school representative. They will also be carrying school identification when they meet you at the airport
- photos of the airport meeting point
- your ISC's contact details
- emergency contact details.

Travelling with your family

Studying abroad is a big deal! Your family may want to personally see where you will be living, or even take a holiday in Australia. This is completely fine and we encourage individual students and their families to do what's best to ensure a positive arrival experience.

Please be aware, however, that when meeting you at the airport your host school is not responsible for the transport of any additional people (including family members) to your homestay.

Your homestay is not required to provide accommodation for anyone else, including your family, however they will be happy to meet your parents, for example for a meal. Your ISC can provide advice on accommodation nearby your homestay if your family accompanies you.

If you do have family members accompanying you on your journey to Australia, please let your ISC know in advance, and provide their contact details via the Flight Details Form.

Please keep your Arrival Support Form with you at all times during your journey.



ARRIVING AT YOUR HOMESTAY

It's an exciting moment to arrive at your homestay! After a long journey, at last you will see your homestay and meet your homestay family members.

When you first arrive at your homestay you will be introduced to your homestay family and shown around your new home. Your ISC will need to spend a bit of time with you and your homestay family, to help you settle in and finalise any remaining paperwork.

Tips for a positive arrival

We hope you feel excited and happy when you arrive at your homestay. At the same time, it's normal to feel tired after your long journey and you may feel overwhelmed or even a bit homesick.

Here are some tips we recommend in the first hours after you arrive.

- Get in touch with your family back home. Say hi and let them know you have safely arrived.
- Eat something (your homestay family will have a meal or some snacks ready for you when you arrive).
- Have a shower and change into some clean clothes.
- Have a rest – a nap or a lie down.
- Start to get to know your homestay family and tell them a bit about yourself.
- Your homestay family might offer to take you on a tour of the local area, which is a good thing to do on your first day.
- Try not to just stay in your bedroom even if you're tired. Getting to know your homestay family will be easier if you make the effort to spend time together.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY

Language and cultural differences

Understanding, speaking and writing in English can take some time. The only way to learn is to give it a go! To help you along we have a couple of suggestions:

- don't overcomplicate things: it's fine to use simple language and short sentences
- have a go: don't be afraid to communicate, even when you're not sure of the best word
- download translation apps: technology is your friend! Download a translation app such as Google Translate to help you when things get tricky.

EVEN THOUGH YOU MIGHT BE TIRED, TRY NOT TO JUST STAY IN YOUR BEDROOM. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY WILL BE EASIER IF YOU MAKE THE EFFORT TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER.



HOMESTAY LIFE

Here are a few general guidelines about life in an Australian home, to help you feel comfortable and ensure everyone has a positive experience during your homestay.

These guidelines apply within all homestay families.

Drinking water

Australian tap water is completely safe to drink. Filtered or bottled drinking water is not necessary in Australia.

Food

Australian cuisine varies greatly. It is very likely that every household will have a different menu and eat different types of food during the week.

Here are some of the meals and foods that a typical Australian family might eat:



Breakfast: toast, cereal, muesli, yoghurt



Morning tea: fruit, muesli bar, yoghurt, cheese and crackers



Lunch: sandwich and a piece of fruit, or food such as meat and vegetables that can be heated in the microwave at school



Afternoon tea: fruit, muesli bar, instant noodles, veggie sticks, cheese and crackers



Dinner: rice or pasta with meat and vegetables



Supper: warm drink (e.g. tea, hot chocolate), slice of cake, biscuits

There may be differences between the food you have grown up with and the food available at your homestay.

Always let your homestay family know if you have any dietary requirements or allergies.

In many Australian families, it is normal for families to make extra for dinner so that students can take some for lunch the next day. Your school will have a microwave so that you can heat your lunch.

Utensils and cutlery

Common Australian eating utensils and cutlery may not be the same as in your home country. The majority of Australians eat with a knife, fork and spoon. You are always able to purchase your own eating utensils, or give ours a go!

Household appliances

Don't be afraid to ask how to use household appliances as you need them. Everything from the washing machine to the kettle might operate a little differently from what you are used to. It is a great idea to double check with your homestay family before you start using any household appliance.

Bed linen

At a minimum your homestay family will provide you with:

- pillow and pillow case
- bottom and top sheets
- quilt (also called a doona) and quilt cover.

Victoria can be cold during the winter, so ask your homestay family for extra blankets if you don't feel warm.

If you do not feel comfortable discussing this with your homestay family you can get in touch with your ISC.

Household cleanliness

In most homestay families there will be an expectation that everyone will help with household chores. This includes keeping the house clean and tidy. You may be asked to help set the table before meals, wash the dishes or load the dishwasher and keep your personal spaces tidy. Australian families rarely have staff to help with cooking or cleaning at home.

Bathroom etiquette

Water is regarded as a scarce resource in Australia, with many households taking extra measures not to waste water. Please be mindful of this when using the bathroom facilities. Consider the following to be best practice.

- Avoid showers longer than 15 minutes. A 5–10 minute shower is best.
- Don't leave water running while you brush your teeth.
- Always turn off taps properly.
- Only flush toilet paper down the toilet. Any other items will block the toilet.
- Never squat on a western toilet: it may break and you could injure yourself.

Laundry

It is a good idea to discuss laundry with your homestay family. In some families, the parents do most of the laundry but in others, children (especially teenagers) help with this responsibility, including putting clothes in the washing machine, hanging clothes on the line and bringing them in once they are dry. In Australian households, because the weather is so nice, often families hang their washing on a line outside to dry instead of using an electric clothes dryer. Your homestay family will show you how this works.

If you are more comfortable doing some, or all of your own laundry, this is completely fine.

House rules

Each homestay will have a unique set of expectations, which will be provided to you in greater detail by your school. Your homestay's house rules might include:

- behaviour
- cleaning/chores
- use of common facilities (e.g. bathroom, kitchen, laundry)
- curfews
- approval of any overnight stays (away from your homestay)
- going out with friends
- guests.



PERSONAL SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION

Always keep your homestay family and ISC informed of your schedule and whereabouts.

It is important to let your homestay family know if you won't make it home on time and to ask permission if you would like to go out with friends.

If you ever get lost while you are out, or feel unsafe, contact your homestay family or ISC straight away.

When you arrive in Victoria your ISC will give you a Student Safety Card which has phone numbers to call in an emergency. Keep this with you at all times. It is also a good idea to save a photo of the Student Safety Card to your phone.

If you have any concerns regarding your experience at your homestay or school, let your ISC, teacher or school principal know as soon as possible.

Homestay payments

Homestay payment process

All homestay payments should be made electronically. If you have any issues, your ISC can speak to your homestay family and parents/legal guardian about payments on your behalf.

THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR TO EXPLORE AUSTRALIA OR PLAN A VISIT BACK HOME. IF YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, YOU NEED TO LET YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY AND ISC KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

TRAVEL, OVERNIGHT STAYS AND VISITORS

Visits from family

Just like if a family member arrived with you in Australia, if your family would like to visit later on, it is very important that you notify your homestay family and school. Your homestay is not required to provide accommodation for anyone else, including your family, however, they will be happy to meet your parents, for example for a meal. Your ISC can provide advice on appropriate accommodation nearby your homestay if your family wishes to visit.

Overnight stays

If you would like to spend the night away from your homestay, for example with a friend's family, you must obtain written permission from both your homestay family and your parents/legal guardian. Speak to your ISC as soon as possible as this sometimes takes some time to organise.

Holiday travel plans

There are many opportunities throughout the year to explore Australia or plan a visit back home. If you plan to travel during the school holidays, you need to let your homestay family and ISC know as soon as possible. The Student Travel Policy states that your school has to approve any travel, including organised tours, to ensure your safety and welfare at all times. Travel is not permitted during the school term.

And finally...

We hope this kit has answered some of your questions about what your Australian homestay experience will be like.

We are excited you have chosen to study with us and can't wait to welcome you to Melbourne and our student cities across Victoria!

See you soon!



Helpful information

Even though you're ready for life in Victoria, it's good to know where you can find information. Use these contact details and online resources to get help quickly and easily.

Services

Emergency: Police, Ambulance, Fire

Ask for Police, Ambulance or Fire. This is a free call and an interpreter is available if you need one.

Dial: 000

Dial: 112 (from mobile)

Dial: 106 (from TDD text phones)

Non-urgent: Police

Dial: 131 444

Web: police.vic.gov.au

Australian Taxation Office Apply for a Tax File Number

Dial: 13 28 65

Web: ato.gov.au

Victoria Legal Aid Legal information service

Dial: 1300 792 387

Web: legalaid.vic.gov.au

Foreign Embassies in Australia

Dial: 02 6261 1111

Web: dfat.gov.au/about-us/foreign-embassies/pages/foreign-embassies-and-consulates-in-australia

Studying in Victoria

Department of Education, International Education Division

Email: international@education.vic.gov.au

Web: study.vic.gov.au

Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and tertiary entrance

For more information on study assessment in Victoria:

Web: vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/index.aspx

Health and Medical

Student safety

For information on student safety and what to do in an emergency:

Web: study.vic.gov.au/en/living-in-victoria/health-and-safety/pages/default.aspx

Health Insurance

Web: studyinaustralia.gov.au/global/live-in-australia/insurance

Nurse on Call

Dial: 1300 60 60 24

Victoria Poisons Information Centre

Dial: 13 11 26

Lifeline Australia

A 24-hour crisis support line and mental health services:

Dial: 13 11 14

Web: lifeline.org.au

Useful Websites

Money and banking

Web: moneysmart.gov.au

Australia Post

Includes all post office locations:

Web: auspost.com.au

Time and date

Check the time in your home country or the time in Victoria:

Web: timeanddate.com/worldclock

Cost of living

For an up-to-date estimate of student fees and costs:

Web: www.study.vic.gov.au/en/international-student-program/school-fees/pages/default.aspx

Migration and Visas

Department of Home Affairs

Dial: 131 881

Web: homeaffairs.gov.au

Transport

Road maps and directions

Web: google.com/maps

Melbourne airports

Melbourne and Avalon airports – international and domestic air travel:

Web: melbourneairport.com.au

Web: avalonairport.com.au

Melbourne Airport Bus

Skybus operates between Melbourne Airport and the city centre:

Web: skybus.com.au

Public transport: PTV

Dial: 1800 800 007

Web: ptv.vic.gov.au

Tourism

Around Victoria

Web: visitvictoria.com

In Melbourne

Web: whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Web: visitmelbourne.com

Live and work in Victoria

To find out more about living and travelling in Victoria:

Web: liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au

City of Melbourne international student guide

Tips for making the most of being a student in Melbourne:

Web: melbourne.vic.gov.au

Helpful apps to download

Some of these won't be available in your home country, but they might come in useful after you have arrived.



Social media:

WeChat, Facebook, Instagram



Entertainment:

Spotify, YouTube



Messaging apps:

WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger



Mental health:

Headspace



Public transport:

PTV, Tram Tracker



Translation:

Google Translate



Maps:

Google Maps

We hope the information in this guide is useful in preparing for your studies in Victoria. Don't forget to visit the websites we've given you to make the most of living in Victoria and Melbourne.

If you have any questions or need some help, contact the International Education Division at international@education.vic.gov.au or your school's international student coordinator.

Good luck with your preparations and we look forward to welcoming you to Victoria very soon.



Victorian Government Schools

International Student Program

Department of Education

GPO Box 4367, Melbourne Victoria 3001, Australia

Email: international@education.vic.gov.au

Web: study.vic.gov.au

CRICOS Provider Name and Code:
Department of Education, 00861K

