

Australian Homestay Network (AHN)

August 2009

***Working together to build complete
homestay solutions.***

Brief History

In 2006 an industry group commenced planning a strategy to improve the homestay industry because of shared concerns regarding quality, compliance and standards. Chris Evason from International Education Services (IES -University of Queensland Foundation Year managers) met with David Bycroft (known for his work initiating compliance for Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) and they became the founders of what has become known as the Australian Homestay Network (AHN).

It was agreed that IES would develop the AHN system if David Bycroft would lead an external group from the industry to assist with AHN structure, policies, procedures and online content.

IES developed the AHN system and own the online platform.

A new company (Homestay Management Pty Ltd) was established to fund all associated work and be the managers of the system and the network for Australia and New Zealand.

IES is the owner of the AHN online system. Homestay Management Pty Ltd is the appointed manager of the project for Australia and New Zealand.

The industry has responded well to these initiatives – particularly government, education institutions and organisations who are concerned about:

- Accommodation shortages for international students
- Compliance with the National Code
- Duty of care responsibilities

The AHN has an Advisory Board chaired by Sylvia Lewohl who has had 18 years experience in homestay and is acknowledged as a key person with respect to initiating compliance and appropriate legislation and controls for homestay in Australia.

The AHN Advisory Board includes representatives from around Australia who have significant experience in both the homestay and international education industry.

The Australian Homestay Network is Australia's largest facilitator of trained homestay hosts and international student placements.

In 2010 AHN is on schedule to achieve over 10,000 student placements in homestay.

International Education Services Ltd

International Education Services Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation which provides educational products and services. It was started in 1997, with the principal function to manage and operate the University of Queensland Foundation Year (UQFY).

In the subsequent 12 years, the UQFY has become one of the most respected foundation programs of its kind in Australia and currently enrolls more than 500 international students annually, of which more than 80% will continue on to study undergraduate programs at UQ.

More than 2,500 undergraduate students have entered UQ through IES and the UQFY since the program commenced.

IES also partners with the Australian Federal Government and others in offering training to Australian recruitment agencies and other stakeholders in the international education industry through its Professional International Education Resources (PIER) brand.

PIER has introduced the first accredited courses for professionals working in international education, delivered on-line see www.pieronline.org.

PIER also delivers the Education Agent Training Course (EATC) in partnership with Australian Education International (AEI) and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

IES was the winner of the Queensland Government's Partnerships for Positive Outcomes Award in 2007.

IES is governed by a Board of Directors, with extensive experience, expertise and reputations in a range of relevant disciplines such as education, finance, law, human resources, and government.

IES' corporate mission is to help individuals achieve success through excellence, innovation and growth.

IES and AHN System

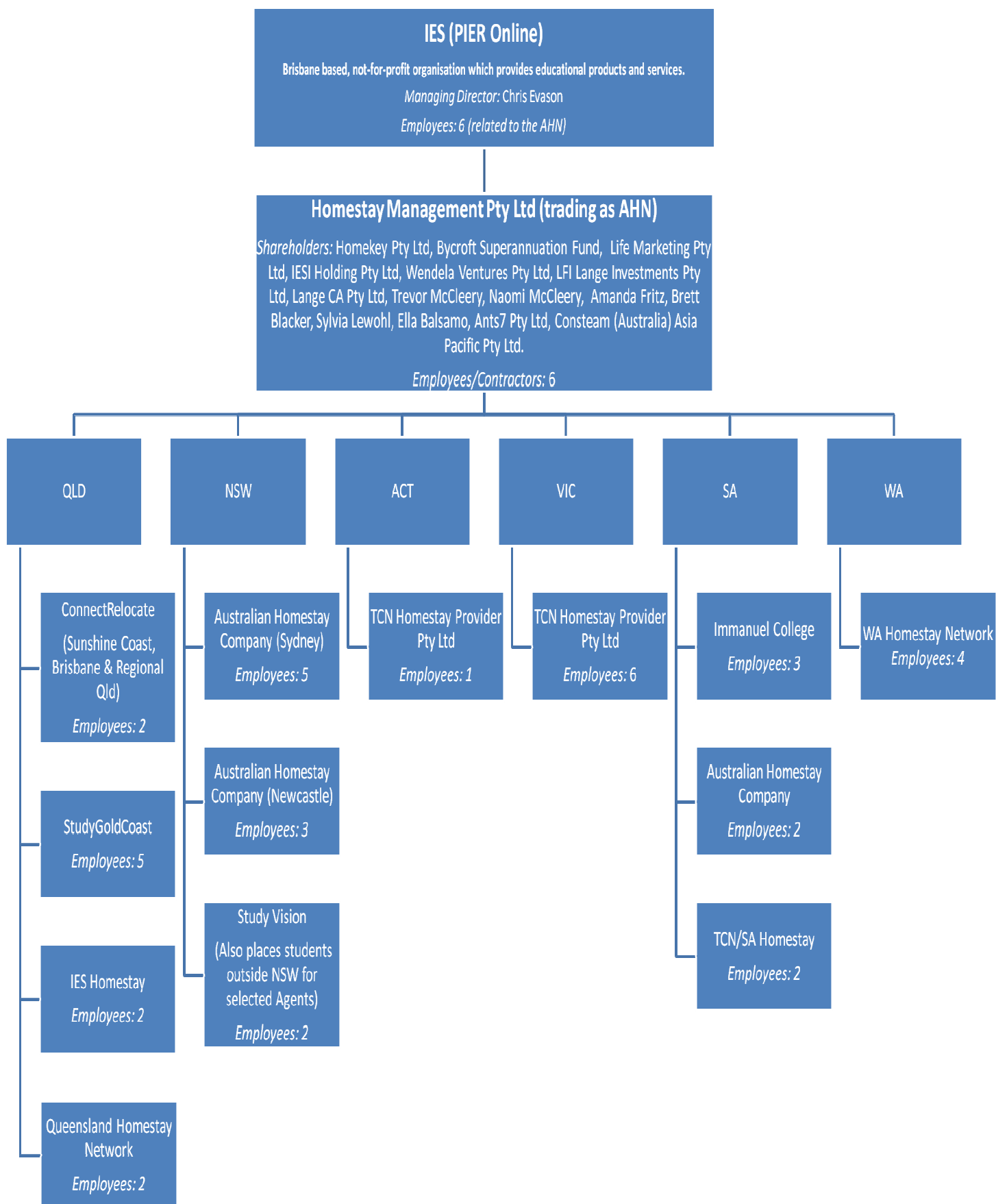
In 2006, Chris Evason from IES met with David Bycroft.

After detailed discussions about homestay and issues/problems Australia wide, IES decided to work with a group led by David Bycroft to develop a web-based computer program, to manage the IES homestay business with substantial improved efficiency.

In 2007, IES decided to license this system to Homestay Management Pty Ltd to further develop the system and enable this innovation to be employed by the wider Australian education industry. This software was to become the basis of the AHN management system that is now available to all Australian education institutions and agents.

IES has registered the brand Australian Homestay Network (AHN) and the domain www.homestaynetwork.org

Following is a summary structure document of current AHN supervisors in Australia:



Homestay Issues before AHN

As part of the development process we have initiated industry feedback regarding homestay issues.

These are summarized below:

- Different culture/lifestyle expectations between host & student
- Lack of resources for supervisors of Homestay
- Lack of support staff
- Poor systems / processes
- Need for nationally accredited processes, benchmarks and standards
- Need to maintain local individuality
- Changing demographics of the students
- Supply of trained hosts to deal with these issues
- Need to educate agents
- Varying levels of service provided to homestay students
- Limited choice, lack of supply and quality of hosts
- Need for better information/ resources for parents or guardians overseas
- Need for compulsory insurance (hosts and students)
- Need for professional 24/7 emergency support

AHN membership helps address these issues.

AHN Objectives

The Australian Homestay Network's aim is not only to supply a compliant online portal for the delivery of Homestay to universities, organisations and providers of Homestay, but also to develop and enhance a 'cultural experience' through the Homestay opportunity for International students choosing to study within Australia.

The Australian Homestay Network (AHN) has been established to create the platform, leadership, systems and processes for compliant Homestay management.

It is free for Education Providers to become a member of AHN.

AHN is a network of:

- individuals
- institutions
- organisations
- agents
- and groups...

...all associated with the provision of quality Homestay services in Australia.

AHN members are committed to and share the vision of:

- a consistent and compliant approach to the provision of Homestay services in Australia
- continuous development and improvement of the AHN system and procedures for the benefit of all AHN members
- The promotion of AHN Homestay as a marketing positive for studying in Australia

What is the Australian Homestay Network?

- A new, online and compliant, national management system for Homestay
- A network committed to the cultural exchange experience
- A service ensuring consistent homestay operational and delivery standards
- A method for facilitation and resourcing for homestay institutions and supervisors
- A commitment to meeting all relevant legislation

What AHN provides:

- A management system for Homestay
- National, State and Regional compliance standards
- Online training for hosts
- Professional development for supervisors/providers
- Network and structure
- National branding, advertising and supply strategies
- Insurance and emergency 24/7 phone support for students and hosts

AHN Fundamentals

- Ensure appropriate supervision in an approved Homestay environment
- Enable the student to experience the culture of the region in which they are studying
- Encourage the sharing of the students own culture with their Homestay host
- Provide a structure for community interaction and network establishment for the student

AHN Expectations - Homestay Host

The Homestay Host assists the student to:

- Orientate themselves with the local area
- Learn local customs in a relaxed and friendly setting
- Establish community interaction and networks
- Be encouraged to share their culture and experiences
- Feel welcomed in their home and in Australia
- Enjoy acceptable and agreed levels of support

How Institutions will benefit

- Assistance with compliance to National Code
- Quality assurance enhancement
- Nationally supported branding and advertising
- Better peace of mind
- Enhanced Australian Homestay image
- Happier students
- System access and homestay accountability

How Supervisors will benefit

- Streamlined processes through online portal
- Manage student bookings
- Manage homestay hosts
- Communication system
- Training and professional development
- Assist with compliance to National Code for Education Providers
- Quality assurance
- More focused workload (more proactive than reactive)
- AHN Network account manager providing local support, training and liaison

How Homestay Hosts will benefit

- Improved communication through online portal
 - Defined and supported structures
 - Increased level of valid up to date industry information
- Free training and professional development
- More efficient and better homestay experience
- Homestay community - networking opportunities with other local and state host families
- 24/7 emergency assistance and insurance

How Students will benefit

- Trained and supported host environment
- Improved communication through online portal
- Online Homestay payment records
- Enhanced cultural and Homestay experience
- 24/7 emergency assistance and insurance
- 24 Hour Assistance - AHN Homestay Students

AHN Students will have 24 hour/7 day access to an assistance line proving:

- AHN Homestay Help Desk
- Medical Assistance and Referral
- Telephone Legal Advice
- Stress & Trauma Counseling Referral
- Emergency Interpreter Assistance
- Claim Lodgment

Insurance Benefits - AHN Homestay Hosts

Cover up to \$10,000* for loss or damage to the Homestay Host's Building&/or Contents as a result of:

- Deliberate or Malicious Damage caused by Homestay Students.
- Loss of Homestay Student Fees should the Host's residence become uninhabitable as a result of Fire, Explosion, Earthquake, Tsunami or Storm Damage
- Illegal Use of Credit or Financial Transaction Cards up to \$5,000

Insurance Benefits - AHN Students

Cover for the Homestay Students Belongings up to \$10,000* for Loss or Damage caused by:

- Fire Explosion & Lightning
- Earthquake or Tsunami
- Storm, Hail or Rainwater Damage
- Burglary or Theft
- Accidental Breakage of Fixed Glass
- Fusion of Electric Motors
- Food Spoilage following a Fusion event up to \$1,000
- Deliberate or Malicious Damage
- Illegal use of Credit or Financial Transaction Cards up to \$5,000
- Personal Liability up to \$10,000,000 Australia Wide

*Excess of \$100 applies per claim

The AHN Solution

- Moving market control from hosts/agents to industry management
- Combining user buying power (targeted advertising for new hosts)
- Centralising and upgrading key resources
- National and local coordination
- Definition of tasks and appropriate resourcing
- Continuous improvement process
- Providing systems and processes to simplify and better operations

Homestay Update

Education institutions outsourcing homestay are now being offered the opportunity to have the compliance security of AHN by making the decision to only refer students to private Homestay supervising organisations that meet minimum criteria such as:

- An online compliant and accessible/fully trackable/auditable system
- An acceptable industry Advisory Board overseeing the integrity of systems and processes
- Professional 24/7 phone support including emergency and critical incident management
- Appropriate insurances for both hosts and students
- Part of a Quality Assurance National Homestay Network

Educations institutions supervising their own student homestays are able to manage their homestays on the AHN platform using the compliant system and associated support services.

Outstanding supervisor issues to be addressed by the AHN include:

- Overseas agents privately arranging homestays
- Australian multicultural groups/individuals setting up 'country of origin' family homestays with no accountability or controls
- Parent nominated homestays being included in the accountability process for homestays
- Online student-host matchmakers/cut price homestays
- Urgent need for better quality and more homestay hosts

2009 in Australia

- AHN is the largest supplier of trained homestay hosts in Australia
- AHN group will be Australia's largest homestay student placement service

Challenges for the future:

1. A need for quality hosts Australia wide.

We are currently advertising for new homestay hosts who are prepared to be involved in cultural exchange and quality services provision as the foundation of the relations. We offer free membership and online training with no obligation to take a student until they have been interviewed and their house assessed by an AHN trained supervisor. Payment to be a homestay host is non-assessable income (tax free) for up to two students per household. Persons wishing to become trained hosts with AHN should phone **1300 MY STAY (1300 697 829)** or simply log on to www.homestaynetwork.org

2. Ensuring education institutions only refer students and their agents to homestay operations that meet the minimum criteria.

Australia's education institutions have to be made accountable for referring accommodation options in Australia. If they ensure that their agents also follow acceptable practices we are a long way to solving the problem.

For further information

Contact David Bycroft on 0402 925 632 or by email dbycroft@homestaynetwork.org