

PENRITH



2019 STUDENT AMBASSADOR INFORMATION BOOKLET

HISTORY

In November 1984, a Sister City Agreement was signed between Penrith City (New South Wales, Australia) and Fujieda City (Shizuoka, Japan).

For the past 31 years a student exchange ambassador program has been coordinated between the sister cities and over 250 Australian and Japanese students have had the opportunity to experience each other's culture first hand.

The majority of students have found visiting their sister city a wonderful and rewarding experience. Past exchange students and their parents often comment that participation in the program has had a positive effect on their overall development and a major influence on their career path.

The program sends a maximum of six students from Fujieda City to visit Penrith City for approximately three weeks during July/August and a maximum of six students from Penrith City to visit Fujieda City. The program runs for approximately three weeks during September/October. During the visits students are under the care and control of the respective City Council officials and organizing committees.

The Student Ambassador Program is coordinated through committees appointed by the respective City Councils. Penrith's organising committee, the Penrith International Friendship Committee (PIFC), and Fujieda's organizing committee, the Fujieda International Friendship Society (FIFS), liaise closely with their respective City Councils.

These committees are responsible for organising host families and a myriad of events for the exchange students. These committees also research and organise but do not pay for travel arrangements, excursions and airline tickets. They are also responsible for planning and scheduling information sessions for their own students prior to their visit.

Please note that the approximate cost for each student undertaking this program will be about AUD \$2,500. This is an approximate cost which incorporates airfares, travel insurance and an excursion to Hiroshima. Extra money will also be required for personal use on items such as favourite foods, souvenirs, etc.



Note: map is not to scale

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following eligibility criteria must be met by students wishing to participate in the Ambassador Program:

1. Attends a high school/university within the Penrith Local Government Area, at the closing date of applications; *and/or*
2. Is a resident of the Penrith Local Government Area, at the closing date of applications;
3. Is of a minimum age of 15 years, as at 30 June 2019; and
4. Is of a maximum age of 19 years, as at 30 June 2019

APPLICATIONS

Applications for the 2019 Penrith Student Ambassador Exchange program close at **4pm on Friday 19 April 2019.**

The Penrith students will visit Fujieda in late September/October 2019, incorporating the end of Term 3 and the school holidays. The Fujieda students will visit Penrith in July/August 2019.

The application form is:

- To provide information about the applicant. It is important that this part of the application is completed in its entirety.
- To provide referee details with copies of school reports, etc; and
- To give the selection panel an insight to the applicant's reasons for applying for membership of the delegation. This information (if successful) will be forwarded to Fujieda.

After the close of applications, the applicants and their parents will be contacted by telephone to arrange interview times. Interviews will be held on **Saturday 4 May 2019** (this date is subject to change).

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection panel will ask the student questions covering various aspects of local and national interest, cultural awareness and reactions to situations. When selecting delegates, the selection panel will consider the student's application form, references/reports and their interview.

Where possible, referees will be contacted before the interview to eliminate delays.

Applications are **not** restricted to members of the Penrith International Friendship Committee (PIFC) however families of the successful students will be expected to join the Committee (family membership \$22pa).

In addition, they would be expected to participate in PIFC activities in relation to the 2019 Student Exchange Ambassador Program and the Information Night for prospective 2020 ambassadors.

It is essential that parents are aware of important information issued at each of the following events:

1. Information evening (held Wednesday 20 March 2019);
2. The interview at Penrith City Council (held Saturday 4 May 2019);
3. Cultural night (held Tuesday 3 September 2019); and
4. Host Family night (date to be advised).

For this reason it is expected that at least one parent attends each of these meetings. It is a very large responsibility sending students overseas and therefore parents must play an active role in seeking accurate information about the program.

PIFC will require the parents' acceptance of the Obligations Agreement, Indemnity Form and the Student Agreement.

By signing these agreements parents are agreeing to a full participation in the program and that they understand all instructions relating to acceptable behaviour whilst visiting Fujieda.

SELECTION OF HOST FAMILIES FOR FUJIEDA STUDENTS

PIFC considers the program incomplete if the student's family does not also experience having an exchange student from Fujieda visiting their home.

If circumstances prevent a Penrith student from hosting a Fujieda student, PIFC will seek other interested host families from previous student exchange families, volunteers or other PIFC members. Non-hosting families will still be expected to participate in the visit of a nominated Fujieda student for meals or other activities in conjunction with that student's host family.

In line with the State Child Protection Act 2012, all adult members of host families will be required to apply for a Volunteer Working With Children Check. Applicants can access the online form at www.newcheck.kids.nsw.gov.au (no fees apply for this form, see information sheet attached for further details).

Additionally representatives of PIFC will visit the home of intending host families to discuss the suitability of accommodation (sharing rooms with host children is permitted and may apply in Japan) plus other necessary arrangements for the Fujieda students.

An information night for host families will be held before the arrival of the Fujieda delegation. It is compulsory for at least one adult member of each host family to attend along with the selected students.

VISIT TO PENRITH BY FUJIEDA STUDENTS

ITINERARY

The Fujieda students will visit Penrith in July/August, during the Japanese summer school holidays. PIFC will be responsible for transferring the students between the airport and Penrith. On arrival in Penrith, Fujieda students will be greeted by host families who will transport them to their homes before the commencement of formal activities.

The meeting is normally at the Penrith Civic Centre and may be quite early in the morning. Actual arrival date and times are subject to confirmation.

PIFC will coordinate a program of activities for the Fujieda students and this will run between 8.30am and 4.30pm on weekdays. During other times it will be the responsibility of the host family to care for their visitor. Host families will need to transport their allocated Fujieda student to and from the Penrith Civic Centre on activity days and two to three formal (evening) events. Weekends are considered 'family time' for the visitors to observe the lifestyle of Australian families and take part in the activities of host families.

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

In order to run the program of activities, PIFC will require the assistance of the families of the Penrith delegation members (and other host families) to join a roster and escort the Fujieda students on various excursions. On these excursions, PIFC will cover the travel and entry costs of the Fujieda students and their official escorts. Other children of host families may accompany Fujieda students on some activities at their own cost.

To address the requirements of the State Child Protection Act 2012, all volunteers who escort the students on excursions will be required to apply for a Volunteer Working With Children Check.

HOST FAMILIES

Penrith City Council will provide each host family with a booklet **Student Ambassador Program – Guidelines for Penrith Host Families** which will outline the responsibilities of host families. The booklet was prepared in liaison with PIFC. It should be noted that while the host families and PIFC are responsible for the overall care and control of the Fujieda students, Penrith City Council has a duty of care towards the visitors. Parents and/or guardians of the Fujieda students are required to sign an indemnity form prior to the student departure. The reverse applies to the Penrith students.

Host families will also be provided with an additional booklet prepared by PIFC containing further details of the Fujieda students' itinerary, telephone numbers of other host families, emergency contact numbers and some 'hosting tips' that may be useful for their host families.

Both these publications will be issued and discussed at the Host Family Information Night. However, there are some points in the booklets that need to be highlighted.

They are:

- The Fujieda students will be instructed by the Fujieda International Friendship Society (FIFS) that they should only telephone Japan by **reverse charge**, or by using a **phone card** which will charge the call back to Japan. In addition, students should always ask before they use the telephone and they should keep their calls short, even for local calls. These instructions will also be given to the Penrith students visiting Fujieda, because Japan's international phone charges are **higher** than those in Australia and their local calls are **timed**.

If some parents make their own arrangements by way of a mobile telephone with international roaming then it is at the discretion of the parents/guardians.

- Students will **always** ask permission before using the host family's wifi or computer.
- Social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, should be used appropriately and with discretion. Photos of other people, be it a host or friend, should not be posted without consent. Inappropriate language or comments will not be tolerated and families will be notified of any unacceptable behaviour.
- Students need to be aware of appropriate times to use mobile devices and take photographs. Asking a host or volunteer guide if it is appropriate is recommended. If in doubt, ask.
- The Fujieda students are in Penrith to learn about the Australian way of life. It is up to each host family to decide how often they take out their student and if they pay entry charges, etc, for family outings. The same will apply in Japan, where host families may seek to pay for their visitors. Penrith students will be instructed to offer to pay the entry fees but accept gracefully if their host insists on paying. It is also suggested that as well as taking the exchange students sightseeing, they should also have the opportunity to experience day-to-day activities in the host home and family circle.
- A balance should be maintained between showing the Fujieda students around and providing an opportunity for them to experience the Australian day-to-day lifestyle, particularly when attending a normal family gathering, such as visiting relatives, shopping for household items, sporting activities, etc.

VISIT TO FUJIEDA BY PENRITH STUDENTS

FLIGHTS

The members of Penrith's student delegation will visit Fujieda for approximately 21 days around the NSW school holidays at the end of Term 3. The dates will depend upon the availability of airline tickets and the availability of Fujieda organisers for transport purposes. Dates will be advised to successful delegation members as soon as possible however the tickets will not be booked until the travellers' names are known.

PIFC will be responsible for the booking of airline tickets and families will be advised when their deposits and balance payments are due. Owing to current booking arrangements with the airline, fares have often had to be paid quickly to secure the booking. For this reason, once a student is selected:

1. a copy of his/her passport must be provided so that names can be accurately entered on the booking form
2. a \$500 deposit will be required
3. the remainder of the airfare is to be paid within 4 weeks.

PIFC will book the flights with a reputable airline, depending on cost and availability at the time of the flights. It is common for the arrival airport in Japan to be Nagoya. PIFC will also organise travel insurance [compulsory] and advise parents when payments are required. An additional cost is involved to cover transportation costs on the students' excursion to Hiroshima. The **approximate** cost of airfare/insurance is expected to be in the vicinity of AUD \$2,500.

COSTS

Penrith students must meet their own costs for their visit to Japan. In addition to the airfare, these costs include: costs of passport, departure/airport taxes (probably included in the airfare), gifts for host families, international phone calls, excess baggage, entry fees for activities with host families, gifts/souvenirs to bring home, incidentals and pocket money.

PASSPORT

To enter Japan, students will require a passport that is valid for at least six months after their arrival date in Japan. Any student not holding a valid passport should apply for one as soon as possible after their selection as a member of the Penrith Student Ambassador delegation. Any students not travelling on an Australian passport or unsure about their passport validity should contact Kerrie Gane (Vice-Chairperson, Student Exchange Committee of PIFC) phone: 0409 022 551 email: gane@tpg.com.au.

INFORMATION SESSIONS

As mentioned previously, all members of the Penrith student delegation are **required to attend** the information sessions about Fujieda and Japan. As these sessions involve external people, session times may interfere with other commitments of the students. The aim of these information sessions is to prepare the Penrith students for visiting and living in Japan so that they may gain an understanding and respect for the Japanese culture and lifestyle.

The sessions will inform the students about the everyday lifestyle of Japan such as food, household arrangements, bathroom facilities and most importantly the

difference between Australian and Japanese culture. What we consider to be acceptable in Australia may not be considered acceptable in Japan.

The selected students will also meet as a group in 'getting to know you sessions' to familiarise themselves with other delegates, relevant civic, community and tourist information about Penrith City and to prepare for formal occasions in Fujieda.

These sessions will also ensure that the students are prepared to undertake their role as an ambassador of Penrith City. Therefore it is important that the students know about their city and their country in order to answer questions which may be asked during their visit.

ITINERARY

Prior to their departure, students will be given an itinerary which will list the excursions organised by the Fujieda International Friendship Society and Fujieda City Council. Normally an interpreter will accompany the Penrith students during the visits. The itinerary includes a visit to Hiroshima and each student is required to contribute towards the costs of this excursion.

Accommodation is 'homestay', which is usually with the families of the Fujieda Exchange Students who visit Penrith. It is normal protocol for students to follow Japanese custom and take a gift for each member of the host family. Host family's information will be provided once available. Students will be given some material provided by Penrith City Council, which may be used towards a gift. Similarly, Fujieda students will bring gifts to their host families. It is customary to give and receive gifts.

As mentioned previously, Penrith students are requested to ask before using the host family's telephone and Internet services. One simple method is to obtain a **telephone card** as it is cheaper than reverse charge calls. Please note that while telephone cards usually work through private (line) phones and mobiles, they do not always work from all public telephones, or through switchboards. Local calls within Japan are timed and rates can be as high as 10yen (up to 15cents, approx) for as little as 30 seconds therefore it is important to keep calls short.

If Penrith students depart Japan with excess baggage it is important to have enough money (in Japanese currency) to pay for any extra charges. The limit for checked-in luggage is **one 'hold' baggage** weighing a maximum of **20kg** plus **one 'carry on'** baggage weighing a maximum of **5kg**. During increased security measures, the airlines are more inclined to restrict excess luggage. The current cost of extra baggage to Japan is approximately \$A30 – \$A75 per kg. The cost from Japan is much higher, as much as double depending on the airline and weight will vary between airlines.

Fujieda City Council normally pays for entry and travel fees for Penrith students during excursions organised by Fujieda with the exception of the Hiroshima excursion. However Penrith students are expected to pay for their own incidental expenses, such as snacks and souvenirs at these events.

When Penrith students go out with their host families, the agreement between the organising committees is that it is at the host family's discretion whether they or the student pays for the costs (such as entry fees and travel). The host family will determine the number of these outings. Penrith students should offer to pay for their own entry/travel costs and be prepared to accept graciously if the host declines their offer. It is also very important to show appreciation of the offer.

One noticeable difference between Australia and Japan is their acceptable dress code for teenagers. Australians are inclined to wear casual dress unless formal events are specified. However the reverse is more common in Japan. Functions organised by Fujieda City Council should be considered formal (e.g. events where the Mayor and Civic Officials will be present) and formal attire are requested to be worn (a detailed explanation will be provided for successful applicants). Students should take the lead from their Japanese host family and observe the different style of dress of the Fujieda students when they visit Penrith.

Another cultural contrast is that in Japan swimming attire is only acceptable at the beach or pool and not in the streets. Japanese fashion is often more conservative than in Australia particularly in areas outside the major towns and cities. Baggy shorts are becoming more popular but it is certainly not acceptable for males to appear shirtless in the streets.

It is suggested that if students are uncertain then they should ask their host family if the clothes they plan to wear will be suitable for the occasion. Australians can usually shrug off embarrassment however the Japanese do not cope well with embarrassment. Thus it is really important for delegation members to avoid embarrassing their hosts (that is, anyone in Fujieda).

As mentioned above it is necessary for successful students to understand the importance of attending cultural nights and information sessions prior to their departure. These sessions are obligatory. The people of Japan will see Penrith students not just as ambassadors but as Ambassadors for both Penrith and Australia. Hence these sessions will greatly assist the delegation members to understand the Japanese culture in depth. Students will also gain a greater understanding of acceptable behaviour and ways of interacting with the Japanese in order to avoid embarrassing their hosts. What is acceptable in Australia is often not acceptable in Japan.

Examples of behaviour that may not be acceptable in Japan would be:

- cuddling or hugging Japanese students;
- cuddling, hugging and/or kissing your fellow Penrith students;
- inviting people back to your host family home;
- harassing people for phone numbers and email addresses;
- complaining about the itinerary;
- making jokes, that you would think were acceptable in Australia, but would most likely be considered rude in Japan; and
- Behaviour that mocks or disrespects Japanese culture or the citizens of Fujieda.

Under no circumstances will smoking of cigarettes, the use of recreational drugs and the consumption of alcohol be tolerated. If any of these items are in the student's possession, the student will be immediately transported back home. Prescription drugs are permitted accompanied by a letter from your doctor.

JAPANESE LAW

(<http://smartraveller.gov.au/Countries/asia/north/Pages/japan.aspx>)

When you are in Japan be aware that local laws and penalties including ones that appear harsh by Australian standards do apply. If you are arrested or jailed the Australian Government will do what it can to help however Penrith City Council would be unable to do so.

Information on what the Australian consular officers are authorised to do is available from the [Consular Services Charter](#) website.

The minimum age for purchasing and consuming alcohol in Japan is 20 years old.

If you are arrested even for minor offences such as petty theft or possession of very small quantities of illegal drugs, you may be held in detention for weeks or months during the investigation and legal proceedings. If you are held for questioning, the initial interview may last several hours. The interview may be recorded in writing rather than electronically and with the presence of an interpreter. Under local law a suspect can be held for up to 23 days without being formally charged with a crime and bail is seldom granted to foreigners. Penalties for drug offences are severe and may include heavy penalties, lengthy imprisonment and deportation. Under Japanese law students can be convicted for drug use based on positive blood or urine tests. Penalties for serious crimes may even include the death penalty.

Japan has strict laws governing the importation and possession of firearms and other weapons. Penalties for carrying prohibited items range from confiscation to deportation or a jail sentence. Japanese police are authorised to undertake random searches on the street at any time. If a student is found carrying a knife (including a Swiss army knife) with a blade longer than 5.5 cm then they may be detained, fingerprinted, photographed and/or arrested.

The above information about Japanese Law will be outlined at the Cultural night so it is essential that the selected students attend with at least one parent.

Penrith City Council will not be liable for any damage to person or property if the students are arrested. If they are arrested for any reason their parent/guardian will be responsible for the student's return to Australia at their own expense.

FINALLY

The Student Exchange Ambassador Program involves some formal and informal activities. Former students usually attend and report to general meetings of PIFC on their return home. They all realise the value of their time as an honorary member of a Japanese family and most maintain their links with their host families.

For more information please contact Council's International Partnerships Officer:

Stephanie Loobeek Wood

Telephone: (02) 4732 8258

Email: stephanie.wood@penrith.city