

More Townsville host families needed to keep up with student demand

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INTERNATIONAL students have made themselves right at home in Townsville as they bunk in with local families for their stay.


Asama Jitjamnongmate is an engineering student from Thailand and signed up with Australian Homestay Network to deliver the all-Australian experience.

It didn't take long for Miss Jitjamnongmate to be given her Aussie nickname of June and be treated to some of our iconic foods.


"I feel like this is my home now," Miss Jitjamnongmate said.

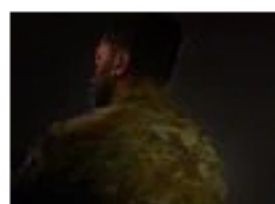
"Sandra drives me around wherever I need to go and talks in the car to me.

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"She taught me how to cook and my favourite dish is corned beef."

Sandra McKavanagh is in her 60s and decided to sign up as a host to fill the void in her empty nest.

"I've always had my grandchildren or young people living with me and I've missed that temporary family."

Living with students like Miss Jitjamnongmate who speak English as their second language has provided a learning opportunity for both parties.

"It was hard to understand June at the start but now we've warmed up to each other I know what she's trying to say most of the time."

Ms McKavanagh said it took a certain kind of person to sign up for the job.

"I think that's just maternal bond it's natural," Ms McKavanagh said. "You have to like young people and be able to relate to people."

The organisation launched in Townsville last year but is faced with the issue of more students than beds available.

Townsville manager Rebecca Paterson said the recent flood had caused a big gap in its database.

"Many of them needed the space to take in their own family and friends," Ms Paterson said.

"We really need host families to sign on because we just don't have many left." Ms Paterson said the process of pairing secondary and university students with host families differed each time.

"I need a wide range of hosts so I can cater to individual needs," Ms Paterson said.

"Some students want to live with pets some don't.

"Some want a family experience."

To find out more visit www.homestaynetwork.org.