



Alissa Lott
Student letter

Dear Host Club and Families,

Thank you for considering me for the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. My name's Alissa Lott, I'm 15 years old and live on the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia. I've lived here for seven years although my family is originally from Victoria, which is two states lower than we are now.

The Gold Coast is most famous for the beautiful beaches, year round warm weather and the five main theme parks in Australia. Where we live, we're only ten minutes away from the beach and Robina Town Centre (which would be a mall in America). I feel extremely fortunate to live here but am looking forward to experiencing life in another country.

I live in a two story duplex style house with my family of six. I live with my mum and dad, and three younger siblings- Toby, my brother, is 13, and my sisters Ruby and Maja are 11 and 8. My mum worked as a teacher at Mudgeeraba Special School but stays at home now, and my dad works at Goldline, which is the company that manages the trams on the Gold Coast as a Safety Assurance Officer. It's his job to make sure the people operating and using the trams follow the rules correctly to prevent accidents.

As a family, we have taken one recent holiday overseas which was last December, to America. We travelled the country for five weeks, and went to places including Las Vegas, Los Angeles and Seattle. It was really fun to experience America as a tourist, and I would love to experience it once more, but this time from a locals point of view.

I have also been on cruises to places like Vanuatu and Papa New Guinea which were really fun. These cruises were about a week long each and I went with my grandparents and brother.

My brother and I are lucky enough to have our own rooms in the house, but my sisters share a room. I have a desk in my room which I use for studying, homework, my artwork and animation, which is my main hobby.

We are a very busy household being such a large family, so all of us kids have to help out around the house.

We also have three pets, two dogs and a cat. The first is a small Maltese Cavoodle called Allie, the second is a Fox-Terrier called Roxy and our cat is a domestic short hair called Maple. We take our dogs for walks to the beach, and sometimes to Daisy Hill, which is a conservation park and koala rescue center.

I go to Emmanuel College, which is about fifteen minutes away from my house by car, but takes almost an hour by bus. My dad usually takes me to school in the car in the morning, and I catch a bus home in the afternoons.

For me, a typical school day is this: I wake up at 6:30 am then get ready for school- pack my lunch and morning tea, get dressed, pack my school bag and eat breakfast. I leave for school at around 7:40 with my Dad, then arrive at school at around 8. I talk to my friends for half an hour and get my books for the first two classes, then go to mentor group or assembly, which we have for half an hour. After that, we have our first two subjects, then a break for morning tea, another two subjects, a break for lunch and then the last two subjects. The day finishes at 3:15 and I catch a bus from the school to home. I then eat dinner and do my homework and once it's finished, talk to my friends, read, draw and relax before going to bed at 10pm.

At school, we all have to take six core subjects, and three electives. For our core subjects, we have the same people in the class for all of them apart from Math. Our core subjects are Physical Education, Christian Education, English, Maths, Humanities (Which alternates between History and Geography) and Science (Which is a mix of Marine Biology, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry).

We also have three elective subjects which we choose ourselves. Mine are Art, Digital Technology, and Food Technology.

I chose Art because my hobby is illustration and animation, and when I graduate school I would like to work in the animation industry doing character design or storyboarding. The skills we learn in art class are incredibly helpful, and the classes allow me to be creative and create things.

I chose Food Technology as cooking is a great skill to have and I've learnt many new recipes and skills. I also believe that learning cooking now will prepare me for the future, as I'll be able to be independent and create healthy meals.

I chose Digital Tech. because technology is becoming an increasingly large part of our everyday lives, as people rely more and more on it. Because of this, in the future the type of coding we learn in Digital Technology will be even more useful than it is today, and it is really interesting learning how programs, websites and games are made and run.

As well as subjects, there are lots of other activities at school that I have enjoyed taking part in, such as the Big Science Competition, volunteering at the school fete, and representing the school at the Readers Cup. I haven't held any leadership titles yet, but plan on becoming a student leader in Grade 12.

My biggest interest is art. I love drawing, painting, and creating animations on Photoshop. I draw everything from animals to aliens and I am constantly looking to improve. I've been interested in art for around three years, since the start of grade 7. I can't remember exactly

why I got into it, but I'm glad I have something to do that I'm passionate about. I spend anywhere from half an hour to five hours a day drawing.

Another of my main interests is reading! I love books, and have since I was little. Fantasy series such as *The School For Good And Evil*, *Harry Potter* and *Maximum Ride* are my favourites. I don't have a set time period set aside for reading, but read on the bus on the way home from school and in bed most days. We have a lovely library at my school so I rarely run out of stuff to read.

I feel that the strongest aspect of my personality is my independence. I am confident in navigating my way around independently to places such as theme parks, Surfers Paradise, and shopping centers. I am also creative, and good at problem solving, which are another two of my best characteristics.

The thing I'm worst at has to be sport. I am terribly uncoordinated and seem to always miss the ball. However, I am trying to get more fit and improve my sporting abilities by going to the gym twice a week with my friend. I really don't enjoy sport, but I am trying my hardest to get better at it even so.

As an exchange student, I hope to become more independent and mature, and be able to handle new situations and tasks. I think this opportunity is a brilliant one, and when I return to Australia I will be far more mature and able to deal with unexpected problems much easier.

Dear Host Club and Families,

Thank you for opening your club and homes to our daughter. We know the Rotary Youth Exchange Program will be a wonderful and life altering experience for Alissa, and we can't tell you how much we truly appreciate you taking the time and energy to care for her, teach her, and make her feel welcome in your country.

Alissa is a very mature, independent, friendly and easy-going young lady. She gets along with all members of our busy household of 6, and is always respectful of other people's time and space. As the eldest of 4 children in our home, Alissa always sets a positive example for her younger siblings, and they in turn look up to her a great deal.

At school, Alissa has a large group of lovely friends. She regularly sees them outside of school, both individually and in small group situations. From conversations with Alissa, and my own observations, it is evident that Alissa is highly caring, considerate and empathetic with her peers. She always seeks to put others at ease, and resolve any conflicts as quickly and peacefully as possible.

She has a great sense of humour, and this is something we will definitely miss around our home. We always have entertaining conversations in the car, and it's always humorous when Alissa tries to educate us on her favourite bands and music styles. It's certainly fun to have her around!

Alissa is very close to our extended family, and as they live interstate we don't get to see them regularly. When they do come to Queensland to visit, Alissa often stays with them for a week or two at a time. She also flies independently to Victoria sometimes, to visit grandparents, aunts and uncles living there, and to spend quality time with them.

From a very young age, Alissa has demonstrated maturity and independence beyond her years. She is sensible and level-headed, and as such, we generally don't have many disagreements at home. If we do, they are only extremely minor. Alissa is always interested and receptive to alternative points of view, and truly seeks to understand the decisions that we as parents make. When Alissa becomes frustrated, she generally likes to talk things through in order to understand the situation more fully, and appreciate why we have come to the decisions that we have. If she feels herself becoming upset, she will remove herself from the situation to calm down a bit, before discussing things further. As a rule though, Alissa is very sensitive to other people's feelings, so disagreements are a rarity with her. Likewise, she's generally not a child we've had to discipline very often.

We have witnessed Alissa pursue a lot of things in life, even when they may be challenging. When she was only in Year 6, she decided that she would really like to go to a private school for high school. We of course supported her, but had to let her know that financially this was not going to be an option, unless she won a full scholarship. At age 12, Alissa independently researched all the local private schools and found out which awarded full

scholarships. It was only one school. She contacted that school, completed the application forms, studied for and sat the rigorous written exam and completed the challenging interview. In the end, she was awarded an academic scholarship, and we couldn't have been prouder. For us, it was not simply about her academic ability, but the fact that she had independently navigated the whole application process and was totally proactive in achieving her dream.

As mentioned earlier, Alissa has always been mature for her age, and as such she is very independent. She catches the bus home from school, and is not afraid to take public transport to places such as the movies or shopping centre to meet up with friends. She is also reliable and responsible, so is often called upon to babysit either her own younger siblings, or the children of friends.

We are very proud of Alissa for so many reasons. She is not afraid to try new and challenging things, such as difficult classes at school, and she gives everything her best shot, even if it is difficult for her – such as athletic competitions! We also love that she is always passionately following her dreams, applying for her school scholarship, devoting her time, energy and creativity to her drawing (in order to pursue a career in animation and story boarding), and applying to go on the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. She is also just downright good company! She is interesting and witty, and likes to discuss and ask questions about current affairs, or things she is learning about in school.

We will miss Alissa terribly, and our household won't quite be the same without her, but this is *her* dream, and we will support her always. We truly hope she has the opportunity to go on exchange, and can experience and enjoy another culture. We believe living in another country for a year, will broaden Alissa's understanding of the world, and give a much richer context to her own life here in Australia. We have no doubt she will grow and develop into an even more amazing person than she already is! We hope the friendships she makes overseas will last a lifetime, and her time on exchange will become a lifelong cherished memory.

Sincerely,
Danielle and Matt Lott