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Australian school lifts ban on HK students

FOUR Hongkong students suspended from classes at a controversial school in Melbourne have been re-instated after investigations by the Australian authorities.

Vice-Consul (Education) of the Australian Consulate General, Miss Denise Faulkner, said yesterday the MDA (now renamed Mooroolbark) Grammar School had agreed that overseas students over the age of 18 would not be required to join the host-family program arranged by the school.

She said these students could make other accommodation arrangements agreed by their parents.

Four students from Hongkong were not allowed to attend school about two weeks ago, and more than 20 others were alleged to have been threatened with suspension, after they refused to join the host-family scheme.

A parent lodged a complaint with the Australian Consulate General in Hongkong.

After investigations by the Melbourne office of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, the students were allowed to return to school last week.

Miss Faulkner had explained earlier that the Australian Government did not impose particular requirements on accommodation for overseas students over the age of 18.

A parent said he also received a letter from the acting school principal, Mr G. Jorgensen, saying that he could make his own arrangements for his son.

Mooroolbark's co-ordinator of overseas students, Mrs Carole Milroy, said parents had been asked to join the host-family scheme to ensure that someone would keep an eye on their children and that the students would turn up for classes.

Meanwhile, Miss Faulkner said a 15-year-old girl, Connie Wong Wai-ling, who has been sent back to Hongkong by the school last month for alleged unruly behaviour, was not considered by Australian authorities to have been deported, as widely reported in the Australian media.