



# HOW TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN YOUR OVERSEAS TOURS

**Offering students opportunities to experience other cultures firsthand is increasingly the norm for schools, but MLC Sydney takes its commitment to holistic learning a step further.**

**In addition to elective co-curricular study tours, the private girls' school has introduced a two-week journey for all year 10 students to northern Thailand as part of the core curriculum.**

Ross Kirby developed the program and says there is a big difference between taking small groups of selected students to developed countries and taking a whole year group to northern Thailand to undertake community work in villages.

"Making this trip part of the year 10 curricula had significant implications for our students, their parents, our staff and the school's broader reputation," Mr Kirby said.

"It's a big undertaking to take 150 girls to local communities in remote Thailand, engage in activities like building huts and for parents to trust their daughters will be safe. Thanks

**Industry:**

Australian Private School

**Service:**

Comprehensive Membership – Scholastic Program

**Location:**

Burwood, Australia

to our membership with International SOS we can give this assurance."

In its inaugural year, staff expected that not all parents would say yes and anticipated about 60% attendance. However, Mr Kirby attributes promoting International SOS as the school's medical and security assistance provider with much higher levels of participation.

"We have found that telling parents International SOS is our medical and security assistance provider is a marketing tool for our trips because so many parents know the name and use it in their own workplaces.

"For those who may not have used their expertise before, hearing another parent speak highly about International SOS carries huge influence," he said.

In addition to providing security and medical assistance on the ground in the event that something happens, MLC requires any staff travelling overseas with students to contact the Assistance Centre for personalised pre-departure briefings from International SOS specialists.

“Our school places a huge emphasis on planning and risk mitigation, which the International SOS team helps with and its services cover every possible scenario. Staff have said the pre-departure briefings and localised alerts and updates help to give them peace of mind and feel valued and supported by the school.”

In addition to supporting staff, International SOS provides advice and support to parents who have specific concerns, such as how a child’s severe allergies can be managed while they are away.

“We’ve had several parents whose children are anaphylactic and who are understandably reluctant to let them join their classmates. After speaking to International SOS doctors and knowing how a situation will be handled if it occurs, the parents feel far more comfortable saying yes. This is a significant outcome for inclusive education and enabling all students to participate in activities to further their own learning,” Mr Kirby said.

Being able to roll up all overseas travel by staff and students into one account has made it easier for those involved in planning each trip and for cost to be apportioned to each budget accordingly.

“Previously, teachers who ran each trip whether it was for music, sport or general education, had to organise it and parents would have to take out their own insurance. International SOS helped us identify which insurance provider covered all our requirements, and thanks to direct billing arrangements we aren’t caught in the middle managing accounts if a situation does occur,” Mr Kirby said.

“Centralising risk management this way also means a consistent approach to compliance across the school, which helps the risk committee in its reviews and it helps the school executive and board.”

“The International SOS model really is a must all schools that are serious about taking students overseas, regardless of location.”

