

23 January 2019

**The Chair  
Economics and Industry Standing Committee  
Inquiry Into Short Stay Accommodation**

Dear Ms Shaw

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry. As a resident of a 'tourism' town and a regular traveller, I would like to make the following observations.

With reference to your TOR;

***1. The forms and regulatory status of short-stay accommodation providers in regional and metropolitan Western Australia, including existing powers available to local government authorities.***

The development of on-line platforms on-selling accommodation has made it increasingly difficult for small rural and regional local governments to keep track of the holiday/ short stay market. Smaller Shires simply do not have the resources or expertise to monitor this fast moving and somewhat nebulous platform, and quickly lose control, as do many larger city local governments. A consistent State-wide policy or legislation would enable them to adopt regulations quickly without each Shire having to 'reinvent the wheel'.

***2. The changing market and social dynamics in the short-stay accommodation sector.***

I would like to comment on this as both a consumer and resident.

**As a traveller** I have stayed in many 'Airbnb-style' venues. Almost without exception, where the owner or manager was living in the building the experience was welcoming, helpful and informative of local events and places to visit, and the accommodation well managed. On the other hand, where the owner was running a number of short stay sites, was not living in the

building or had sub-contracted management to a third party off site, the experience was pretty ordinary. Often access was problematic so I had to bother neighbours or other holidaymakers and in one case the local police became involved. Often there was no connection to the local culture or community and the nuisance factor from other guests was not managed.

At its worst I found myself staying in places where whole streets and in one case a whole town had been deserted by local residents and all semblance of local culture, community life and neighbourhood vibrancy had disappeared - replaced by a sterile shell of lifeless buildings, which must be totally abandoned in the off season.

As a traveller, I will never return to these places, and advise friends to avoid them. My feeling is these places are unattractive to visitors and tourism in such locations is not sustainable. Hence my opinion that short stay needs to be managed for a viable tourism industry.

**As a resident** in a 'tourist town' I find my neighbourhood under increasing pressure from short stays. In the last 10 years, 6 homes in my street have gone to 'Airbnb-style' accommodation with no owner in residence. The local government body has been unable to tell me if there is a limit to this style accommodation and what that limit would be. We deal with antisocial behaviour, overflowing bins and parking issues as well as the inevitable loss of amenity as resident numbers drop.

We also have short stay accommodation where the owner is living in the home, and I strongly support this. We are introduced to new people, know they are being looked after and welcomed and can talk to someone if we see a problem - I would be happy for more of this style to occur.

In addition we have small hotel style accommodation close by, which suits travellers who may not want to stay with a 'host'. These venues are well managed, pay their rates and licences and contribute hugely to our tourism industry - these are not the problem.

Again, I believe there are strong arguments from a residential amenity point of view as well for stronger regulation of 'Airbnb-style' short stay.

### ***3. Issues in the short-stay accommodation sector, particularly associated with emerging business models utilising online booking platforms.***

Many of the sales platforms, while providing convenience to the buyer of short stay products, are based off-shore and continually apply downward pressure on the seller. Their goal is fast turnover of properties and multiple sales. They have no interest in local issues, the viability of local tourism industries or of returning profits to local communities to support sustainable

tourism. Or for that matter, the quality of the experience for the buyer. This has meant a loss of local control and a shift to the short stay market in regional areas from smaller grained personal hosting, to 'Airbnb-style' businesses being used as a real estate investment, where profit is garnered from renting short stay as a commercial business without the checks and balances normally applied to hotels and suchlike. We commonly see properties for sale advertised as 'perfect for an Airbnb investment. It is beginning to feel like a booking platform in America is driving our urban structure and the quality of our neighbourhood's fabric.

***4. Approaches within Australian and international jurisdictions to ensure the appropriate regulation of short-stay accommodation.***

There are many examples world-wide of management methods, my hope is that you are able to act in a timely way before the amenity of our neighbourhood is eroded and the tourism industry finds itself being dictated to by large on-line booking platforms with no interest beyond delivering profits to shareholders.

Thank you for your time and I hope that my experiences as a traveller and resident are of use.

Yours sincerely