

Jenny Mannering

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Sent: Friday, 10 August 2018 2:36 PM
To: SSA
Subject: Inquiry into short term accommodation in Tasmania

To Ms Jenny Mannering
Secretary

Legislative Council Select Committee

Short Stay Accommodation in Tasmania

Please accept this letter as a submission to the Inquiry

There are a couple of issues that have arisen in my examination of the media reports on this subject which seem not to have been adequately examined. **This applies to homestay providers who have a shack or holiday home, but particularly to hosts who are sharing their usual home space.**

Definition of property

On the Airbnb website there are categories that offer to a host the chance to select what form of accommodation they are providing.

The choices are 1) Entire Home or 2) Room(s) in the host's property.

If the host has a part of their home set aside for accommodation which is self-contained ie no need to share bathroom and/or kitchen with the host, then it gets categorised as an "Entire Home" which is not actually the case. The property is still being shared with the owner. The risk is that any legislation proposed may categorise a property that is listed as Entire Home may be required to register as a separate property - which is not the case either.

Employment and economics

If a property owner has space in their home such as a downstairs (or adjoining) bedroom with ensuite and some cooking facilities (eg a small fridge, microwave, kettle and toaster), that space may have previously only been suitable for occasional use for extended family members. As such the host thinks it may be suitable to list on a short term accommodation website to make use of the space as a supplementary income source when not being used by friends or family. These hosts are ordinary Tasmanians such as retirees or unemployed persons who need to supplement their income to be able to afford rising living costs. Especially the increasing number of Baby Boomers as we enter retirement age but don't want to stop work completely or become a burden on society.

As an under-employed property owner I am in a similar circumstance, but I am concerned that any legislation may exclude me from listing a space in my primary residence. Or that conditions of registration may prevent me from affording to participate in benefiting from the short term accommodation market. It is a potential source of employment for a Tasmanian that cannot (due to age) find sufficient employment - thus pushing me to depend on government resources to afford the cost of living. If there is a limitation on the number of days per year one could offer short term stays that would be anti-competitive and against the spirit of homestay. It would put unreasonable limitations on my ability to earn an independent income.

Additionally the small businesses in the vicinity of such a property benefit from the business and there are no more impacts on parking than if the property had been let long term.

Short term or not at all?

If restrictions or excessive costs are imposed upon my ability to participate in the tourism marketplace it is likely I would be limited to using the space only for use by family and friends for whom it is critical that I keep the rooms available.

In my case it would not be made available on the long term rental market

a) because the space has insufficient cupboards and storage space for a long term resident (ie exceeding one month) and

b) because it would prevent me from using it for friends and extended family.

It is these kind of individual circumstances that I suspect apply to many who have registered with short term accommodation website markets.

Cultural tradition

Providing short term boarding facilities has been a part of our culture of sharing and individual hospitality for a long time. My grandparents who travelled for their work frequently stayed in “digs” around the country. They had to walk the streets to find a sign in the window. And wasn’t there a similar story about Bethlehem?

The only thing that has changed is the introduction of online marketing (HomeAway, Airbnb etc) that make it possible for ordinary citizens to have access to a marketplace that could otherwise be monopolised by the “big end” of town who use the same online tools as are now available to home stay hosts.

Visitors to our state often state that what they love about our community is its welcoming and helpful people, and many visitors don’t want the impersonal hotel room but rather they want to feel a part of the place they visit - to get an insight into Tasmanian community and environment. I know that’s what I have enjoyed when I used to travel a lot, to feel like I am “inside the place” not staying in a hotel room that could be in any city in the world. Not everyone wants that but it is important to have that experience as part of the mix of tourism opportunities.

Quality control

The matter of quality control may be a concern for the industry at large, but it seems to me that the online ratings system is very effective and continually raises the bar. The explosion

in facilities on offer will mean visitors have greater choice and will opt for better quality stays every time they book, and so hosts must provide quality accommodation or they will not survive in this highly competitive market. The standard of properties available in the tourism market has improved exponentially over the years since I first worked in hospitality in the 1970's. This I believe is a product of competition not legislation. Let the consumer decide what is attractive, appropriate and good quality.

Risk

I understand the need to restore properties back into the longer term rental market. Companies that own multiple properties in a region or state are hotels - just spread out!

There are risks that profiteering from investment properties can have impacts on ordinary Tasmanians looking for long term rental properties which have been and continue to be taken out of the long term market. But it would be equally socially damaging if ordinary Tasmanians are prevented from, or limited in making an income, by letting out their residential or holiday property on the short term market.

On a personal note

Anyone who has lost their employment long before they are ready to lie down and die, should have the reasonable right to seek the means to continue participation in the economy.
I hope to be able to do that in the years to come.

Yours sincerely

Iain Lang