

BOOKING.COM ON THE ISSUES FACING THE SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION SECTOR IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA (WA)

CONTEXT

Booking.com appreciates the opportunity to provide its views on the short-term accommodation sector in Western Australia and welcomes the McGowan Government's want for certainty in the tourism industry as well as for accommodation providers. Booking.com must stress that our business model is fundamentally different from other short-term rental accommodation providers, e.g. AirBnB and Homeaway.

As a global company operating in 220+ countries and territories, we have first-hand experience with the rapid growth in the popularity of Short-Term Rental Accommodations (STRAs). More and more travellers seek alternative accommodations that suit best their preferences. Instead of staying in a traditional hotel, some travellers, in particular families with children, choose to rent entire apartments and enjoy the benefits they can't get from a hotel, such as adequate space at an affordable price or the ability to connect with locals and experience the true nature of a destination.

At Booking.com, we are proud of the role we play in supporting Australian entrepreneurs and accommodation providers to access travellers from our home market and beyond.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT OPTIONS PAPER

At Booking.com, we believe in a healthy sector for short-term rental accommodations that ensures sustainable tourism in cities. As a responsible player, Booking.com supports balanced regulation of the short-stay market. We believe that transparent regulation creates a safe and reliable environment for travellers and residents alike, contributes to ensuring appropriate safety standards and allows for enforcement by authorities.

We have previously welcomed the proposed Framework by the NSW Government, including the introduction of a Code of Conduct to regulate short-term accommodation. Therefore, if the WA Government, as mentioned by the WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage's Draft Options Paper, decides to implement a similar mandatory Code of Conduct (CoC), Booking.com would welcome the opportunity to engage with the government and would welcome consultation on the composition of any new regulations.

An important point to make is that Booking.com, as a platform operator, has no direct control over the actions of individual STRAs providers and therefore would raise concerns with any measures that assign liability to our organisation in case of non-compliance by individual STRAs providers with any proposed CoC. We will inform property owners about any changes to the local laws and any new regulations they must comply with. However, we believe the enforcement of any existing or new regulation should be undertaken by the relevant government authorities. Furthermore, an important distinction between ourselves and other platforms is that we do not take any payments and, therefore, any potential tax collection is not possible.

Booking.com believes that vacation rentals serve a segment of travellers with a range of options that traditional accommodation may not be best suited to cater for. Therefore, we advocate for a 'light-touch' approach when it comes to regulating vacation rentals. This

approach recognises the fact there is a need for regulation without introducing overly restrictive frameworks that would force the industry underground.

Booking.com looks forward to engaging further with the WA Government and sharing our experience regarding the global STA sector in order to help policy makers determine appropriate measures to address the concerns of residents, industry stakeholders, local and state governments with respect to ever-changing accommodation market in WA.

ABOUT BOOKING.COM

Founded in 1996 in the Netherlands, and headquartered in Amsterdam, Booking.com has become the world's leading accommodation website born in Europe. Our goal is simple: leverage technology to take the friction out of travel by offering the broadest range of accommodations across the world to travellers, while offering a seamless experience and customer service at the best price.

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