



The Hon. Danny Pearson
Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister
for Housing
Level 3, 1 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, VIC 3002

By email: Danny.Pearson@parliament.vic.gov.au

18 July 2022

Dear Assistant Treasurer and Minister

I am writing on behalf of Expedia to offer our congratulations on your appointment as Assistant Treasurer and Minister for the three important portfolios of Regulatory Reform, Government Services and Housing.

Your appointment to these roles comes at an important juncture for Victoria's recovery from COVID and in particular the contribution the visitor economy can make to that. It is critical that the Victorian Government continues its work on understanding the new world order for travel, accommodation, visitor spend and the impact this has on jobs and prosperity across the State.

The Expedia Group of brands gives us strong partnerships across the entire tourism sector – from commercial hotel offerings and traditional bed and breakfasts to family owned holiday homes. We are in a unique position to provide a holistic perspective and supporting evidence-base on the Government's role in creating the right policy and operating environment for the industry.

For Expedia, this operating environment is impacted by touch points within your remit that go beyond a focus on tourism. As a digital platform operating in many countries around the world, we have seen significant developments in the policy and regulatory landscape as governments come to terms with the way the industry uses technology and its interactions with customers.

For Victoria, short-term rental accommodation (STRA), provided through online companies like Stayz (which is owned by Expedia), has become a significant and growing segment of the tourism accommodation sector providing a range of benefits to travellers, homeowners and local economies, particularly in regional areas where traditional tourism accommodation is limited. In the most recent economic analysis prior to COVID, the STRA sector in Victoria hosted approximately 2.1 million nights of accommodation, contributed \$1.53 billion to the economy and supported over 9,617 FTE jobs across the State, primarily within the tourism sector. Importantly, it is estimated that approximately half of these jobs are in regional areas where tourism makes a critical contribution to economic prosperity and provides ongoing opportunities for local growth and employment.

As a leading online marketplace for STRA across Australia, Stayz are committed to working closely with Commonwealth, state and local governments to maximise the contribution of the STRA sector to Australian tourism and local communities that thrive on the visitor economy. We have been active participants in many government processes around the country related to policy and regulatory developments for the short term rental accommodation industry. These mostly relate to jurisdictions misunderstanding the reasons for Australia's housing affordability and accessibility challenges- the outcomes of which significantly undermine the potential of tourism for little or no contribution to alleviating the housing crisis issues.

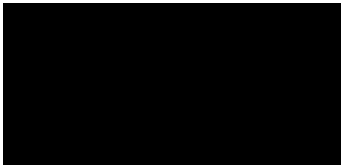
From the very beginnings of families renting homes for holidays, Stayz has been an ardent supporter of ensuring that the sector can maximise its contribution to local jobs and economic prosperity at the same time as meeting community expectations. A valuable feature of STRA is its potential to act as the catalyst for the development of tourism in regional Australia – utilising existing infrastructure for accommodation purposes and leading to new opportunities for local businesses. STRA doesn't require significant capital investment or government incentive packages to grow regional tourism and benefit regional businesses, communities, homeowners and visitors alike. STRA will play a vital role in helping achieve the tourism goals and targets for Australia.



Online platforms like Stayz are able to provide valuable insights into tourism and accommodation through our extensive data. The economic analysis referenced above is part of valuable time series being developed by Stayz on the size and economic contribution of the STRA sector. We are keen to collaborate with you on data collection and analytics on the STRA sector that will support policymakers in the design of tourism strategies and regulators to be able to properly manage the sector.

I realise you will be incredibly busy in your new role, but when time permits, I would like to meet with you to discuss these issues in more detail. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with any questions or to arrange a time to speak further.

Regards,



Eacham Curry

Director, Government & Corporate Affairs | Expedia Group

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Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Adem Somyurek
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19/3/2020

Dear Minister,

I am writing to bring to your attention the landmark data sharing agreement that was struck recently between the European Commission and global sharing economy platforms, including Expedia Group, the owner of local short-term rental platform, Stayz. I have enclosed a copy of the media release announcing the data sharing agreement to this correspondence.

Short-term rental accommodation (STRA), provided through online companies like Stayz, has become a significant and growing segment of the tourism accommodation sector in Victoria and across the world providing a range of benefits to travellers, homeowners and local economies, particularly in regional areas where traditional tourism accommodation is limited. In the 2017-18 financial year the STRA sector hosted approximately 2.14 million nights of accommodation, contributed over \$1.53 billion to the Victorian economy and supported over 7,000 FTE jobs across the state, primarily within the tourism sector.¹ Tourism Research Australia's recent report found that one-third of domestic travellers have used online accommodation platforms, like Stayz, with 37% of holiday and 38% of business travellers using STRA.

Expedia Group and Stayz have always been committed to working closely with national, state and local governments to maximise the contribution of our sector to Australian tourism and local communities that thrive on the visitor economy. Online platforms are able to provide valuable insights into tourism and accommodation through our extensive data. Earlier in the month, Expedia Group was proud to form part of a data sharing agreement with the European Commission that will allow Eurostat to collect and publish verifiable data about the STRA sector across the European Union. This important step will, for the first time, give governments across Europe a better understanding of the size and dynamics of short-term rentals and help inform effective policy and regulation.

Stayz is a major supporter of tourism across Victoria, particularly the regional dispersal of tourists by supplementing accommodation choice and availability and opening up the state's unique destinations. In the 2017-18 financial year 90 per cent of Stayz's booking revenue in Victoria was from regional areas that prosper from tourism and where traditional accommodation is often not available. Stayz has worked closely with local governments in Victoria as they consider their approach to STRA in their local areas. We were also active participants in the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions recent Regional Tourism Review which is due to respond to consultation. Here, we emphasised STRA's potential to

¹ Until recently, despite the STRA industry's strong growth, there has been little quantitative information on the size and economic contribution of the industry in Australia. To address this knowledge gap, Stayz commissioned an analysis of the STRA sector's economic contribution across Australia, including regional economies for the 2017-18 financial year. The research was carried out by ACIL Allen Consulting, the largest independent Australian owned economics and policy consultancy in Australia.

act as the catalyst for the development of tourism in new areas – utilising existing infrastructure for accommodation purposes and leading to new opportunities for local businesses that thrive on new visitors.

We recognise that with the growth of any new industry there may be some disruption caused to traditional sectors and concerns raised by interest groups and the community. We strongly believe that STRA and the traditional accommodation sectors are complementary, rather than in competition, and with the right regulatory settings in place across Victoria, property rights, neighbourhood amenity issues and other community concerns can be addressed while ensuring the benefits of sustainable tourism are realised. Here, an accurate picture of the sector, informed by verifiable data, will support policymakers to design tourism and planning strategies and regulators to properly manage the sector.

To that end, Stayz is advocating for a Victoria-wide regulatory approach that is built upon a data sharing agreement similar to that announced with the European Commission and includes:

- A state-wide approach to short stay regulation so as not to geographically distort the market, creating ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ among local areas.
- A state-wide, compulsory and simple registration system for all properties listed on a short-term rental accommodation platform. This will collect meaningful sector data, help inform sensible and easily understood policy, and ensure the desired outcomes.
- The creation of a mandatory short-term rental code of conduct for owners, managers and guests, including an enforceable Three Strikes Rule for those who do not meet the standards.
- The establishment of a new largely industry-funded and administered body to quickly address problems and adjudicate questions about amenity, noise and overcrowding at short-term rental accommodation properties.

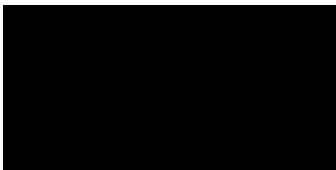
State and Territory governments across Australia are developing and implementing new policy and regulatory frameworks for STRA. In Tasmania, Stayz worked collaboratively with the Government on the development of its Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019 which established an Australia-first data sharing agreement with online STRA platforms. In WA, after a thorough parliamentary inquiry, the WA Government announced its commitment to a whole-of-Government approach and endorsement of the need for a register of all short-term rental accommodation across the state. The NSW Government is finalising its new regulatory framework for STRA which includes a state-wide planning framework, a mandatory Code of Conduct and changes to strata legislation. NSW is also considering the introduction of a new industry-led STRA property register. As part of its approach the NSW Government established an STRA Advisory Committee which included key stakeholders from industry, community and government. In Queensland, the Government has convened an STRA Industry Reference Group to help in the design of a property register and discuss the next steps for a state-wide regulatory framework. These approaches have worked well, and we'd welcome similar opportunities for collaboration in Victoria.

Our experience in other jurisdictions shows that issues related to short stays – amenity, accessibility and affordability – are best addressed through a state-wide regulatory framework including a simple registration system and a mandatory and enforceable code of conduct for owners, managers and guests. Stayz is committed to leading this process with the Victorian Government and industry and community stakeholders. We hope that the Government's approach allows for the collection of meaningful STRA data which can provide a clearer picture of the size and dynamics of the sector across the state and inform effective regulatory refinements. The recent data sharing agreement in with the European Commission may serve as a useful starting point on which to build.

The Expedia Group family of brands – including Stayz, Hotels.com, Trivago, and Wotif – gives us strong partnerships across the entire tourism accommodation sector – from commercial hotel offerings and traditional bed and breakfasts to family owned holiday homes. This puts us in a unique position to provide an international and holistic perspective and supporting evidence-base for tourism policymakers and on Government's role in supporting an operating environment for the entire visitor accommodation and tourism industry. Here, we are keen to contribute to, inform and collaborate with the Government on policy and regulatory outcomes for our industry.

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me [REDACTED] if you would like to discuss STRA regulatory approach in Australia or more information about how the data sharing agreement with the European Commission could be replicated here in Victoria.

Regards,



Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Corporate and Government Affairs
Stayz Pty Ltd

About Stayz

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Commission reaches agreement with collaborative economy platforms to publish key data on tourism accommodation

Brussels, 5 March 2020

The Commission has reached a landmark agreement with Airbnb, Booking, Expedia Group and Tripadvisor on data sharing. This will allow Eurostat, the EU statistical office, to publish data on short-stay accommodations offered via these platforms across the EU.

The agreement will for the first time permit access to reliable data about holiday and other short-stay accommodation offered via these collaborative economy platforms. It will contribute to more complete statistics on tourist accommodation around Europe, allow public authorities to better understand the development of the collaborative economy and support evidence-based policies.

Commissioner Thierry **Breton**, responsible for Internal Market, said: *"Tourism is a key economic activity in Europe. Short-term accommodation rentals offer convenient solutions for tourists and new sources of revenue for people. At the same time, there are concerns about impact on local communities. For the first time we are gaining reliable data that will inform our ongoing discussions with cities across Europe on how to address this new reality in a balanced manner. The Commission will continue to support the great opportunities of the collaborative economy, while helping local communities address the challenges posed by these rapid changes."*

Commissioner Paolo **Gentiloni**, responsible for Economy, said: *"This important milestone will enable Eurostat to support public authorities around Europe that seek data on collaborative short-term accommodation services. They will in the future be able to use these newly available data for informed policymaking. For the first time, Eurostat will cooperate directly with industry to make reliable data covering the entire EU available in a coherent manner"*.

The agreement, signed between each platform and Eurostat, on behalf of the European Commission, envisages:

- **Regular and reliable data from the four platforms:** Shared data will include the number of nights booked and the number of guests. Data will be aggregated at the level of municipalities. Platforms agreed to share data on a continuous basis.
- **Privacy:** The privacy of citizens, including guests and hosts, is protected in line with applicable EU legislation. Data will not allow individual citizens or property owners to be identified.
- **Publication of data:** The data provided by the platforms will undergo statistical validation and be aggregated by Eurostat. Eurostat will publish data for all Member States as well as many individual regions and cities by combining the information obtained from the platforms. It is expected that the first statistics could be released in the second half of 2020.

BACKGROUND:

The collaborative economy, also called the sharing economy, covers a great variety of sectors and is rapidly growing across Europe. A survey conducted by Eurostat in 2019 showed that 21% of EU citizens used a website or an app to arrange accommodation from another person and 8% have done the same for transport services. In the tourism sector, the collaborative economy provides many exciting opportunities for citizens as consumers as well as for micro-entrepreneurs and SMEs. At the same time, its rapid development has led to challenges, particularly in popular tourist destinations. As a result, cities and other communities are seeking to strike a balance between promoting tourism, with the economic benefits it brings, and maintaining the integrity of local communities.

To promote a balanced development of the collaborative economy, the Commission issued [Guidelines to EU countries in 2016](#) on how existing EU rules apply to the collaborative economy. A series of workshops in 2017 and 2018 identified policy principles and good practices specifically on collaborative short-term accommodation services.

In the short-term rental sector, the Commission is also working with cities around Europe to address issues that have arisen as a result of the rapid growth of collaborative short-term accommodation rentals and maintains a continuous exchange with local regulators. These discussions address possible policy actions and good practices for consideration of public authorities and other stakeholders when

Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
The Hon. Richard Wynne
Level 16
8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

richard.wynne@parliament.vic.gov.au

19/3/2020

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To promote a balanced development of the collaborative economy, the Commission issued [Guidelines to EU countries in 2016](#) on how existing EU rules apply to the collaborative economy. A series of workshops in 2017 and 2018 identified policy principles and good practices specifically on collaborative short-term accommodation services.

In the short-term rental sector, the Commission is also working with cities around Europe to address issues that have arisen as a result of the rapid growth of collaborative short-term accommodation rentals and maintains a continuous exchange with local regulators. These discussions address possible policy actions and good practices for consideration of public authorities and other stakeholders when

putting into place policy measures in line with EU law.

Today's agreement will allow Eurostat to obtain key data from the four collaborative platforms and publish key statistics on short-term accommodation rentals concluded through these platforms on its website. Eurostat's role is to provide reliable and comparable statistics on Europe so that all stakeholders can make informed decisions.

MORE INFORMATION:

[Flyer on Flash Eurobarometer Survey on Collaborative economy \(2018\)](#)

[Overview of Commission policy actions on Collaborative economy](#)

[Eurostat dataset on collaborative economy](#)

IP/20/194

Press contacts:

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General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)



Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade
The Hon. Martin Pakula
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121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

martin.pakula@parliament.vic.gov.au

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Commissioner Thierry **Breton**, responsible for Internal Market, said: *"Tourism is a key economic activity in Europe. Short-term accommodation rentals offer convenient solutions for tourists and new sources of revenue for people. At the same time, there are concerns about impact on local communities. For the first time we are gaining reliable data that will inform our ongoing discussions with cities across Europe on how to address this new reality in a balanced manner. The Commission will continue to support the great opportunities of the collaborative economy, while helping local communities address the challenges posed by these rapid changes."*

Commissioner Paolo **Gentiloni**, responsible for Economy, said: *"This important milestone will enable Eurostat to support public authorities around Europe that seek data on collaborative short-term accommodation services. They will in the future be able to use these newly available data for informed policymaking. For the first time, Eurostat will cooperate directly with industry to make reliable data covering the entire EU available in a coherent manner"*.

The agreement, signed between each platform and Eurostat, on behalf of the European Commission, envisages:

- **Regular and reliable data from the four platforms:** Shared data will include the number of nights booked and the number of guests. Data will be aggregated at the level of municipalities. Platforms agreed to share data on a continuous basis.
- **Privacy:** The privacy of citizens, including guests and hosts, is protected in line with applicable EU legislation. Data will not allow individual citizens or property owners to be identified.
- **Publication of data:** The data provided by the platforms will undergo statistical validation and be aggregated by Eurostat. Eurostat will publish data for all Member States as well as many individual regions and cities by combining the information obtained from the platforms. It is expected that the first statistics could be released in the second half of 2020.

BACKGROUND:

The collaborative economy, also called the sharing economy, covers a great variety of sectors and is rapidly growing across Europe. A survey conducted by Eurostat in 2019 showed that 21% of EU citizens used a website or an app to arrange accommodation from another person and 8% have done the same for transport services. In the tourism sector, the collaborative economy provides many exciting opportunities for citizens as consumers as well as for micro-entrepreneurs and SMEs. At the same time, its rapid development has led to challenges, particularly in popular tourist destinations. As a result, cities and other communities are seeking to strike a balance between promoting tourism, with the economic benefits it brings, and maintaining the integrity of local communities.

To promote a balanced development of the collaborative economy, the Commission issued [Guidelines to EU countries in 2016](#) on how existing EU rules apply to the collaborative economy. A series of workshops in 2017 and 2018 identified policy principles and good practices specifically on collaborative short-term accommodation services.

In the short-term rental sector, the Commission is also working with cities around Europe to address issues that have arisen as a result of the rapid growth of collaborative short-term accommodation rentals and maintains a continuous exchange with local regulators. These discussions address possible policy actions and good practices for consideration of public authorities and other stakeholders when

putting into place policy measures in line with EU law.

Today's agreement will allow Eurostat to obtain key data from the four collaborative platforms and publish key statistics on short-term accommodation rentals concluded through these platforms on its website. Eurostat's role is to provide reliable and comparable statistics on Europe so that all stakeholders can make informed decisions.

MORE INFORMATION:

[Flyer on Flash Eurobarometer Survey on Collaborative economy \(2018\)](#)

[Overview of Commission policy actions on Collaborative economy](#)

[Eurostat dataset on collaborative economy](#)

IP/20/194

Press contacts:

[REDACTED]

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)



Premier of Victoria
The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Office of the Premier
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002

daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

18/6/2020

Dear Premier,

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To do this, we seek to ramp up engagement with your Government to establish a clear policy direction that recognises the changed tourism operating environment as a result of COVID-19 and the imperatives that go with that. It is with this in mind that I wanted to share that Expedia Group – Stayz' global parent company – has committed AU\$400 million to help partners and destinations rebound from the impact of COVID-19 and fuel industry-wide recovery efforts. Initiatives being rolled out include marketing credits; financial relief on new bookings; utilising proprietary data to give partners actionable insights; destination campaigns including Stayz brand campaigns which hero domestic travel and drive awareness about local experiences; complimentary training and education programs; and a Stayz platform feature which allows enhanced safety practices to be communicated by partners on their property description pages. Further, in an effort to help our Victorian partners anticipate and deliver the experience travellers need to feel safe while staying at STRA properties, we've developed comprehensive cleaning and disinfecting guidelines in consultation with Cristal International Standards, part of Intertek Group. These have been rolled out globally across Expedia Group's STRA brands and can be found [here](#).

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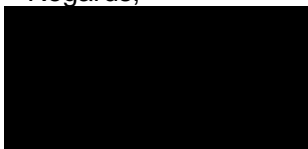
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Mr Eacham Curry
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Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation
The Hon. Melissa Horne
Level 22
1 Spring Street
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Minister for Local Government
The Hon. Shaun Leane
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Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade
The Hon. Martin Pakula
Level 36
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

martin.pakula@parliament.vic.gov.au

18/6/2020

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Following my letter to you on the 19th of March, I write again to seek your advice on and support for kick-starting and expediting the work of the Andrews Government on a state-wide policy and regulatory framework for short term rental accommodation (STRA) to ensure that our sector can fully contribute to the recovery of tourism across Victoria.

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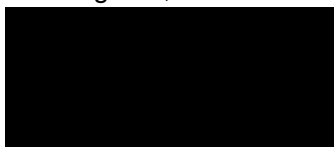
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guidelines in consultation with Cristal International Standards, part of Intertek Group. These have been rolled out globally across Expedia Group's STRA brands and can be found [here](#).

With some travel and other restrictions being gradually eased, the State's tourism industry, including the STRA sector, requires as much support and operating certainty as possible to ensure its rebound is successful. At the moment, the current arrangements for STRA homeowners, guests and platforms remain less than optimal. The major factors impacting our sector are the patchwork of local government approaches across the state and a lack of data and analysis of our sectors size, scope and contribution to the state and its regions.

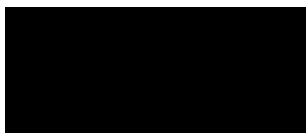
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- a state-wide code of conduct to govern amenity issues, including the behaviour of both guests and owners/managers of STRA properties;
- a government administered certification and enforcement mechanism to ensure compliance with the code of conduct (this could take the form of a simple register);
- state-wide planning rules that cater for the breadth of the STRA industry, taking account of STRA in both urban and regional centres; and
- state-wide compliance standards for STRA properties.

As a leading online marketplace for STRA across Victoria and a stakeholder with significant interest in making sure any new regulation truly delivers the outcomes sought by Government and the community, we are committed to working closely with the Andrews Government. We're not asking for handouts, but for the Government to provide the legal and operating certainty that could be the helping hand Victorian STRA operators need to facilitate tourism dollars flowing back across the state, particularly into regional Victoria. The prompt development and introduction of state-wide STRA rules will provide confidence and certainty for thousands of STRA operators across the state and help boost the recovery of the State's tourism industry.

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me  if you would like to discuss this matter further or, if more appropriate, to connect me with those within the Government with day to day responsibility for management of our sector.

Regards,



Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Corporate and Government Affairs – Stayz Pty Ltd



Premier of Victoria
The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Office of the Premier
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002

daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

18/6/2020

Dear Premier,

I write to seek your advice on and support for kick-starting and expediting the work of your Government on a state-wide policy and regulatory framework for short term rental accommodation (STRA) to ensure that our sector can fully contribute to the recovery of tourism across Victoria.

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on Victoria's tourism industry, with thousands of small businesses across the State struggling with the impacts of travel restrictions. The situation has equally impacted thousands of Victorians who participate in the short-term rental market and who, together, make a significant and unique contribution to the state's tourism accommodation offering, particularly in regional areas where traditional tourism accommodation is limited.

Stayz is not seeking specific assistance, but rather that which will help bring greater certainty and order to the entire accommodation sector and the Victorian communities in which our local property partners operate. Currently, our Victorian partners operate with legal uncertainty, with patchwork regulation and at the whim of local authorities.

Together STRA partners are an important contributor to Victoria's tourism industry, hosting over 2.1 million nights of accommodation and contributing \$1.5 billion to the state economy in 2018. The majority of our Victorian partners are small business owners or Mum and Dad operators who rent out their properties when vacant to help pay mortgages, cover other costs of living or fund their retirements. With the wide-reaching restrictions on travel effectively shutting down short-term rentals overnight and the severe impacts on employment across the economy, we know many of our Victorian partners will be doing it tough. Unfortunately, they are ineligible for many government support packages including the Victorian Government's Business Support Fund which provides support to many other small tourism operators. To support our partners, we are calling for your Government to expedite work on a state-wide regulatory framework to provide operating certainty for them and to ensure that the contribution the STRA sector can make to the recovery and rebound of tourism across the state is fully realised.

To do this, we seek to ramp up engagement with your Government to establish a clear policy direction that recognises the changed tourism operating environment as a result of COVID-19 and the imperatives that go with that. It is with this in mind that I wanted to share that Expedia Group – Stayz' global parent company – has committed AU\$400 million to help partners and destinations rebound from the impact of COVID-19 and fuel industry-wide recovery efforts. Initiatives being rolled out include marketing credits; financial relief on new bookings; utilising proprietary data to give partners actionable insights; destination campaigns including Stayz brand campaigns which hero domestic travel and drive awareness about local experiences; complimentary training and education programs; and a Stayz platform feature which allows enhanced safety practices to be communicated by partners on their property description pages. Further, in an effort to help our Victorian partners anticipate and deliver the experience travellers need to feel safe while staying at STRA properties, we've developed comprehensive cleaning and disinfecting guidelines in consultation with Cristal International Standards, part of Intertek Group. These have been rolled out globally across Expedia Group's STRA brands and can be found [here](#).

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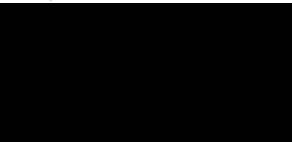
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Regards,



Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Corporate and Government Affairs – Stayz Pty Ltd



Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade
The Hon. Martin Pakula
Level 36
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

martin.pakula@parliament.vic.gov.au

18/6/2020

Dear Minister Pakula,

Following my letter to you on the 19th of March, I write again to seek your advice on and support for kick-starting and expediting the work of the Andrews Government on a state-wide policy and regulatory framework for short term rental accommodation (STRA) to ensure that our sector can fully contribute to the recovery of tourism across Victoria.

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on Victoria's tourism industry, with thousands of small businesses across the State struggling with the impacts of travel restrictions. The situation has equally impacted thousands of Victorians who participate in the short-term rental market and who, together, make a significant and unique contribution to the state's tourism accommodation offering, particularly in regional areas where traditional tourism accommodation is limited.

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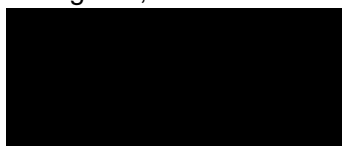
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Regards,



Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Corporate and Government Affairs – Stayz Pty Ltd



To: *Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Bill Exposure Draft*
Policy and Corporate Services
Consumer Affairs Victoria
GPO Box 123
Melbourne VIC 3001

E: cav.consultations@justice.vic.gov.au

From: Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Government & Corporate Affairs
Stayz

Date: 10 May 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments on the Exposure Draft of the Owners Corporations and Other Acts Amendment Bill (the Bill).

As a leading online marketplace for short-term rental accommodation (STRA) across Australia and Victoria, Stayz are committed to working closely with the Victorian Government to share our ideas, experience and knowledge. Further, we are dedicated to working collaboratively with the Victorian Government on fair regulatory arrangements and innovative compliance systems to address concerns and maximise the contribution of the STRA industry to the State's prosperity.

Amendments contained within the Bill are broadly fair, sensible and beneficial reforms for strata title communities and their various users including owner occupiers, long-term rentals (LTR) and STRA users. However, to clarify the intent of some of the amendments and to ensure no unnecessary impact on STRA homeowners and guests we seek a number of minor changes which we outline below. In doing so, we have sought to provide value to your deliberations and a starting point for our further engagement with you.

Insurance levies and special fees and charges – Clauses 12 and 13

Clause 12 of the Bill enables an owners corporation (OC), at its discretion, to levy individual owners for:

- (a) any excess on an insurance claim or premium attributable to the negligence or wilful act of the lot owner or their lessee or invitees
- (b) any uninsured damage to common property caused by a lot owner or lessee
- (c) any excess attributable to a particular lot.

Clause 13 enables an OC, at its discretion, to levy individual owners for special fees and charges relating to repairs, maintenance and other works arising from the particular use of a lot.

There is some merit in both these amendments, however, any scope for OCs to use such rules to unfairly target STRA homeowners or guests should be removed. In giving discretionary power to

OCs, the Bill, or its associated processes should also provide guidance on how, when, where and why levies can reasonably or fairly be imposed. This clause would also benefit from making it clear these rules apply to all strata lot uses. An alternate approach would see the Clause 56 provision that a *rule* is of no effect if it "is oppressive to, unfairly prejudicial to or unfairly discriminates against, a lot owner or an occupier of a lot" extended to also cover such levies.

No effect provision – Clause 56

We welcome the amendment in Clause 56 which expands the operation of the provision from "discriminatory" to also include rules that are "oppressive to" or "unfairly prejudicial to" a lot owner or an occupier.

We seek further clarification regarding the use of the terms "owner" or "occupier" to ensure that the intent is that all lawful users of a lot are included.

Invitees – Clause 57

We see merit in Clause 57 of the Bill which introduces new provisions governing invitees which:

- (a) require an occupier of a lot to ensure that invitees comply with the OC Rules
- (b) make the occupier and invitee jointly and severally liable for any penalty or compensation arising from breaches of the OC rules by the invitee
- (c) provides that the occupier is not liable if the occupier provides the invitee with a copy of the OC rules.

To ensure that all parties can understand and comply with their responsibilities we seek further clarification regarding the use of the terms "occupier" and "invitee" in the Bill. We note that there is some uncertainty over whether an STRA guest is a tenant or licensee following *Swan v Uecker*¹.

Litigation – Clause 70

Clause 70 of the Bill enables individual lot owners to apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for approval to commence, prosecute, defend or discontinue proceeding on behalf of the OC. We seek clarification on whether this clause has the potential to undermine the OC governance system including to facilitate vexatious complaints. If so, we request this provision be deleted.

Fire Safety – Clause 82, Subclause (1)

The safety of Stayz guests and home owners is our highest priority. We support Clause 82(1) of the Bill which empowers OCs to make rules requiring advice to be given to occupiers about fire safety procedures and the operation of the fire alarm system. However, the application of this clause across the full suite of property users must be fit for purpose and reasonable. For example, it is impractical and unnecessary to require the same level of detail be provided to short-term invitees, guests or visitors as long-term tenants and occupiers. Further guidance should be provided in the Bill or its associated processes.

Access to common property – Clause 82, Subclause (3) and (4)

Clause 82 subclauses (3) and (4) of the Bill make rules regarding the use of common property, equipment, services and amenities as well as access to such facilities, services and amenities. We seek clarification that all lawful users retain full access to common areas, property, equipment, services and amenities.

¹ [2016] VSC 313.

Community concerns and regulatory solutions

The growth of the sharing economy and peer-to-peer platforms can create tensions as markets are transformed and grow in differing ways. This can be said for STRA as evidenced by the concerns being raised by some groups and individuals. It is important to highlight that concerns in general with STRA (especially in inner-city apartment buildings) are not new and pre-date the uptake of online sharing platforms. It is also pertinent to note that amenity, sense of community and safety issues are not limited to the provision of short-term rentals. By far the highest proportion of complaints councils receive relates to the activities of permanent residents.

The growth of the sharing economy has come about through technology enabling people to make better use of their spare assets – empty houses, spare rooms and the empty seats in their cars. Rules and regulations specific to the sharing economy – like STRA – should be light-touch and protect consumers and communities without creating undue regulatory burden that stifles the huge shared benefits. Further, in regional areas, where tourism is often the main source of revenue for local businesses, any restrictions on STRA designed for city problems will have detrimental economic effects in regional areas. We do not support one-size-fits-all regulations designed for inner-city problems. A more sophisticated and evidence-based approach to policy design and planning is required; and is demonstrably achievable.

We recognise that with the growth of any new industry there is some disruption caused to traditional sectors and concerns raised by groups and individuals. That's why Stayz is working closely with state and territory governments across Australia looking at how best to create a safe and enjoyable visitor accommodation environment. It is fundamental to the Stayz approach to business that we support homeowners, guests and the local communities where our accommodation is located.

Stayz commits to working with the Victorian Government to further share our ideas, experience and knowledge on tourism, STRA and related issues. We request a meeting with you to discuss in more detail these issues and the points we raise in this submission. We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Eacham Curry
Director, Government & Corporate Affairs
Stayz



To: Regional Tourism Review
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
GPO Box 4509
Melbourne VIC 3001
regionaltourism@ecodev.vic.gov.au

From: Mr Eacham Curry
Director, Government & Corporate Affairs
Stayz

Date: 30 August 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our submission to the Victorian Government's Regional Tourism Review. As a leading online marketplace for short-term rental accommodation (STRA) across Victoria, Stayz is committed to working closely with this Review and wider Victorian Government to share our ideas, experience and knowledge. Stayz is a major supporter of tourism across Victoria, particularly the regional dispersal of tourists by supplementing accommodation choice and availability and opening up the state's unique destinations. 90 per cent of Stayz's booking revenue in Victoria was from regional areas that prosper from tourism and where traditional accommodation is often not available. As such, we are dedicated to working collaboratively with the Victorian Government on innovative tourism policy and fair regulatory arrangements that maximise the contribution of the STRA sector to regional tourism and the prosperity of regional Victoria.

This submission provides a background to our company, Stayz, and presents our perspective on several key questions from the Review's Discussion Paper, in particular:

- What role can share accommodation play in regional communities?
- How can regions and businesses better cater to diverse visitor needs? What are the key accessibility challenges?
- How can we better leverage marketing spend to promote regional visitation?
- What support does industry require to address the challenges and opportunities that technology and disruptors present?

We present recently commissioned data showing the STRA sector's size and economic contribution to Victoria and its tourism regions. Finally, we take this opportunity to raise the regulatory policies we've been working on which we think are best suited to effectively meet community expectations while promoting economic growth and a healthy regional

tourism sector in Victoria. In doing so, we have sought to provide value to your deliberations and a starting point for our further engagement with this Review, the Victorian Government and local councils across the state.

Background to Stayz in Australia

Short-term rental accommodation is a cherished Australian tradition whether for summer holidays at the beach, getaways to the country or exploring a new town. In the past this has been managed directly by property owners themselves or by local agents. Today, with the growth of the sharing-economy and the advent of online platforms – like Stayz – it is easier than ever for property owners to let their properties for a short period of time and for visitors from all walks of life to find affordable and unique accommodation that meets their needs.

Having operated for nearly three decades, Stayz is proud to have helped transform the experience of owning a holiday house, travel and holidaying across Victoria. Over this time, our business has also evolved. Stayz first started as a small tourist accommodation company that produced an annual booklet distributed to real estate agents in holiday destinations who would act as property managers for the various properties listed within the booklet. As the internet grew and technology developed, we changed the way we operated and moved online. Thirty years of experience has taught us that living and working in communities and understanding how to provide visitor accommodation responsibly is essential to success. It is also at the heart of how we approach government policy and regulation.

Growing from a small company, facilitating family holidays 30 years ago, Stayz is today Australia's leading online marketplace for short-term rental accommodation with over 50,000 active listings across Australia. The business has grown in response to the opportunity created through strong demand from Australian homeowners and guests from across Australia and around the world.

Stayz provides Australian families with new income streams, unlocks unique accommodation at Australia's best locations to guests, and supports local businesses and communities that thrive on tourism and the visitor economy. These benefits are shared with regional Australian communities, where nearly 85 per cent of our listings are located. There are approximately 15,000 unique Stayz accommodation listings across Victoria today, from humble beachside shacks along the Great Ocean Road, to cabins in the High Country, cottages across Gippsland and the Grampians, and city apartments in Melbourne.

Homeowners and tourists from across Victoria, Australia and the world are embracing the online model of visitor accommodation. In the 2017-2018 financial year alone, homeowners in regional Victoria hosted over 935,000 nights of accommodation through STRA platforms generating approximately \$222 million in accommodation revenue for themselves and their families. **Importantly, 90 per cent of Stayz's booking revenue in the state was from regional areas of Victoria that prosper from tourism and where traditional accommodation is often not available.**

Stayz is part of the Expedia Group family of brands which gives us strong partnerships across the entire tourism sector – from airlines to tour activities, commercial hotel offerings and

traditional bed and breakfasts to family owned holiday homes. We are therefore in a unique position to provide a holistic perspective and supporting evidence-base on the Victorian Government's role in creating the right policy and operating environment for the entire tourism and visitor accommodation industry as it relates to regional tourism. Below we share our ideas on several questions from the Discussion Paper.

Discussion Paper Question: What role can share accommodation play in regional communities?

Over the past ten years there has been significant growth in “sharing economy” platforms, online marketplaces that enable owners of underutilised personal capital and/or assets (such as spare rooms or holiday homes) to charge a fee for their use to others. In the accommodation industry, it has become increasingly popular to rent rooms or entire properties for short periods of time. This sharing of privately-owned homes is not new, but online platforms have made transactions between owners and users more transparent and efficient. In Australia, STRA is mainly facilitated by online booking services such as Stayz and Airbnb.

The STRA sector has become a significant segment of the tourism accommodation sector, providing a range of benefits to travellers, homeowners and local economies. On the supply side, individuals can earn additional income by renting out the beds, rooms or properties they own that would otherwise be sitting idle. On the demand side, visitors benefit from a wider choice of accommodation options across a wider price range. As a result, more people can travel to more places, and in doing so, purchase other local goods and services in the region they are visiting.

While traditional hotel and resort style accommodation often provide complete in-house holiday experiences – where visitors can dine, shop and entertain within the complex – STRA encourages visitors to seek out and spend at a more diverse range of local businesses. Visitors can also stay in areas that are not serviced or are under-serviced by traditional accommodation providers. This has the effect of opening up competition and thereby choice. Individuals and families, rather than traditional commercial providers, have the opportunity to directly benefit from tourism to their local area. This effectively creates new revenue streams and reduces barriers to entry in the tourism industry, ultimately, supporting residents and economies in regional Victoria.

A particularly valuable feature of STRA is its potential to act as the catalyst for the development of tourism in new and untapped areas of the state – utilising existing infrastructure for accommodation purposes and leading to new opportunities for local businesses to grow with visitor demand. STRA doesn't require significant capital investment or government incentive packages to benefit local businesses, communities, homeowners and visitors alike.

The STRA industry supports economic growth and tourism in regional Victoria by:

- *Making regional areas accessible* – boosting the accessibility and appeal of regional areas where there are fewer accommodation options and acting as a catalyst for tourism in new locations.

- *Growing revenue for local businesses* – holiday home guests spend more and stay longer, generating more revenues for local businesses.
- *Providing quality choices for tourists* – a deeper pool of accommodation options allows regional areas to supply for a variety of visitor price points and tastes and meet fluctuations in demand for longer periods of time.
- *Supporting local jobs* – short-term rental accommodation creates direct and indirect employment opportunities.

Until now, despite the STRA sector's strong growth, there has been little quantitative information on the size and economic contribution of the sector. To address this knowledge gap, Stayz recently commissioned an analysis of the sector in Victoria and its regional economies for the 2017-18 financial year. The research was carried out by ACIL Allen Consulting, the largest independent Australian owned economics and policy consultancy in Australia. The economic analysis provides a robust evidence base on which to build tourism policy and fair regulatory arrangements, including by distinguishing between city and regional areas. Below we present some sector data for Victoria.

Size and economic contribution of the Short-term Rental Accommodation sector in Victoria

KEY STRA SECTOR FIGURES FOR REGIONAL VICTORIA, FY2017-18

- Hosted over 935,000 room nights across regional Victoria – equal to 20.5 per cent of total room nights at traditional accommodation providers (eg. hotels, motels and serviced apartments)
- Generated \$222 million in booking revenue for regional Victorian homeowners
- Contributed \$563.2 million to regional economies in Victoria
- Supported over 3,600 FTE jobs across regional Victoria
- STRA visitor spending generated an additional \$200 million in regional Victoria
- 90 per cent of Stayz's revenue was generated from bookings in regional Victoria
- After staying at a short-term rental for the first time, 82 per cent of travellers plan to do so again in the future

In the 2017-18 financial year, over 935,000 room nights were booked in regional Victoria through online STRA platforms. This represents approximately 20.5 per cent of the total room nights at hotels, motels and serviced apartments in regional Victoria. Homeowners in regional Victoria renting their properties through STRA platforms generated approximately \$222 million in revenue from bookings.

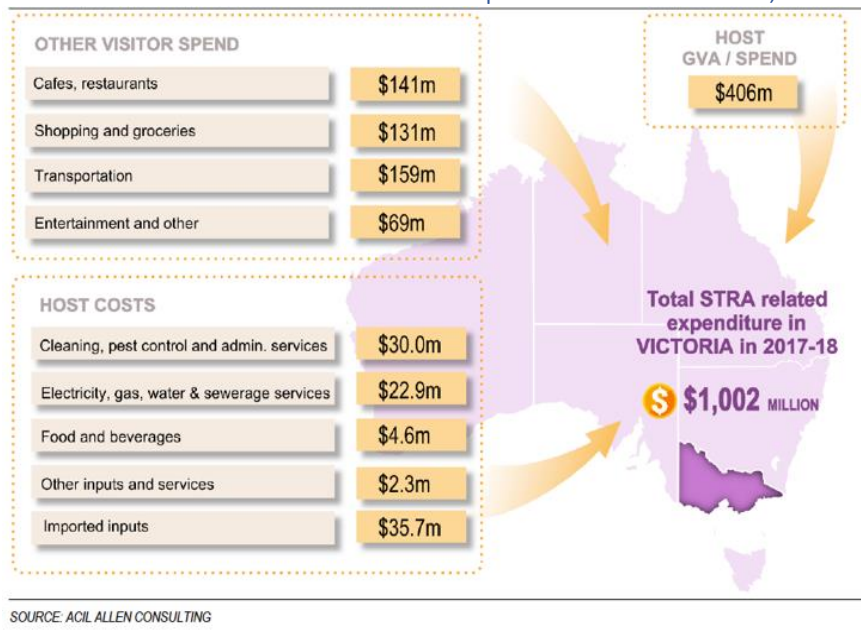
There are a range of channels through which the STRA sector contributes to regional economies in Victoria. Of the estimated \$222 million of direct revenues, \$180.3 million is a direct return to the labour and capital supplied by the regional Victorian hosts. This value is a direct contribution to the Gross State Product (GSP) of the Victoria and its regional economies.

In addition to the direct value added by the hosts, there are three key indirect channels through which the STRA sector contributes to local economies. These are:

1. Purchases of intermediate inputs by hosts related to accommodating the visitors: The hosts of properties who accommodate short term visitors purchase goods and services from various businesses in the region to provide the property for rent. This creates demand for those services and further stimulates the economic activity in the region.
2. Host spend: The additional income received by the local hosts is either spent on purchasing various goods and services including paying off their mortgage or adding to long term savings. This additional spend generates additional economic activity.
3. Other visitor spend: During their stays, visitors spend money on a range of goods and services besides accommodation. This includes spending on cafes, restaurants, transportation, groceries and entertainment much of which is supplied in the area where they stayed. This creates additional economic activity.

In the 2017-18 financial year, Victorian STRA hosts spent \$95.4 million on goods and services in preparing and renting their properties for STRA guests. Of this it is estimated that \$59.75 million was on locally produced goods and services. A more detailed breakdown of STRA’s related expenditure in Victoria (regional and metropolitan) is presented in Figure 1 below.

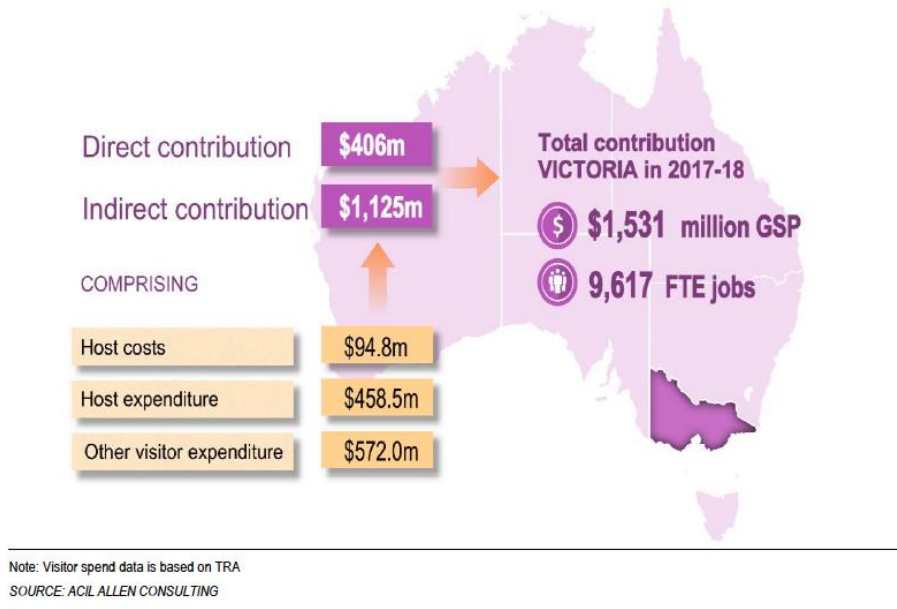
Figure 1 – Short-term rental related expenditure in Victoria, FY2017-18



Based on ACIL Allen Input-Output (IO) modelling, it is estimated that the STRA sector contributed up to \$563.2 million to the regional economies in Victoria in FY2017-18. This regional economic activity supported over 3,600 FTE jobs, primarily in the tourism industry. The largest contributor to this economic activity was STRA visitor spending. Visitors using short-term rentals across regional Victoria generated \$200 million in economic activity through their spending on cafes, restaurants, transportation, groceries and entertainment much of which is supplied in the local area where they stayed. Figure 2 below shows a

breakdown of economic contribution to Victoria (regional and metropolitan) from short-term rental visitors and hosts.

Figure 2 – Total economic contribution of the short-term rental related in Victoria, FY2017-18



It is important to note that the two major STRA operators — Stayz and Airbnb — have significantly different revenues from regional areas of Victoria. In particular, 90 per cent of Stayz’s revenues were from regions outside of Melbourne compared with 37 per cent of Airbnb’s revenues (Figure 3 below).

Figure 3 – Gross revenue shares, Victoria, FY2017-18



Note: "Traditional accommodation" refers to hotels, motels or serviced apartments and tourist parks with 10 rooms or more.
SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING BASED ON HOEAWAY AND AIRBNB DATA AND TRA AUSTRALIAN ACCOMMODATION MONITOR 2017-18.

This difference is driven by the distinct business models of the major operators, highlighting the diversity of product offerings within the STRA sector. Stayz has a significant focus on helping people renting out their secondary homes (i.e. holiday properties) and these properties are generally located outside of major capitals and cities. In contrast, Airbnb’s

business focusses on people renting out their principal place of residence (either rooms or entire places) mainly in urban city centres.

In aggregate, of the \$501 million gross revenue from STRA in Victoria, 44 per cent was generated from outside Melbourne in 2017-18. In comparison, 30 per cent of revenues for the traditional tourist accommodation sector are from regional Victoria.

Though a significant portion of Victorian STRA activity is in regional areas (44 per cent), in comparison this is the lowest regional activity of all Australian states – for example regional Queensland activity is at 86 per cent, Tasmania at 79 per cent and New South Wales is at 56 per cent. This suggests that there are impediments to STRA thriving in regional Victoria but also great potential for the sector to grow and contribute more to regional tourism and economies. Stayz would be happy to provide the Review with national data on the STRA sector and its regional activity for a more detailed state by state comparison.

The size and contribution of the STRA sector across Victoria's tourism regions differs greatly as shown in Figure 4 below. STRA makes up a significant proportion of tourist accommodation in regions such as Gippsland, High Country, Macedon, Spa Country and along the Great Ocean Road. In contrast, there is low penetration of the STRA sector in the Goulburn, Mallee, Murray and Wimmera regions.

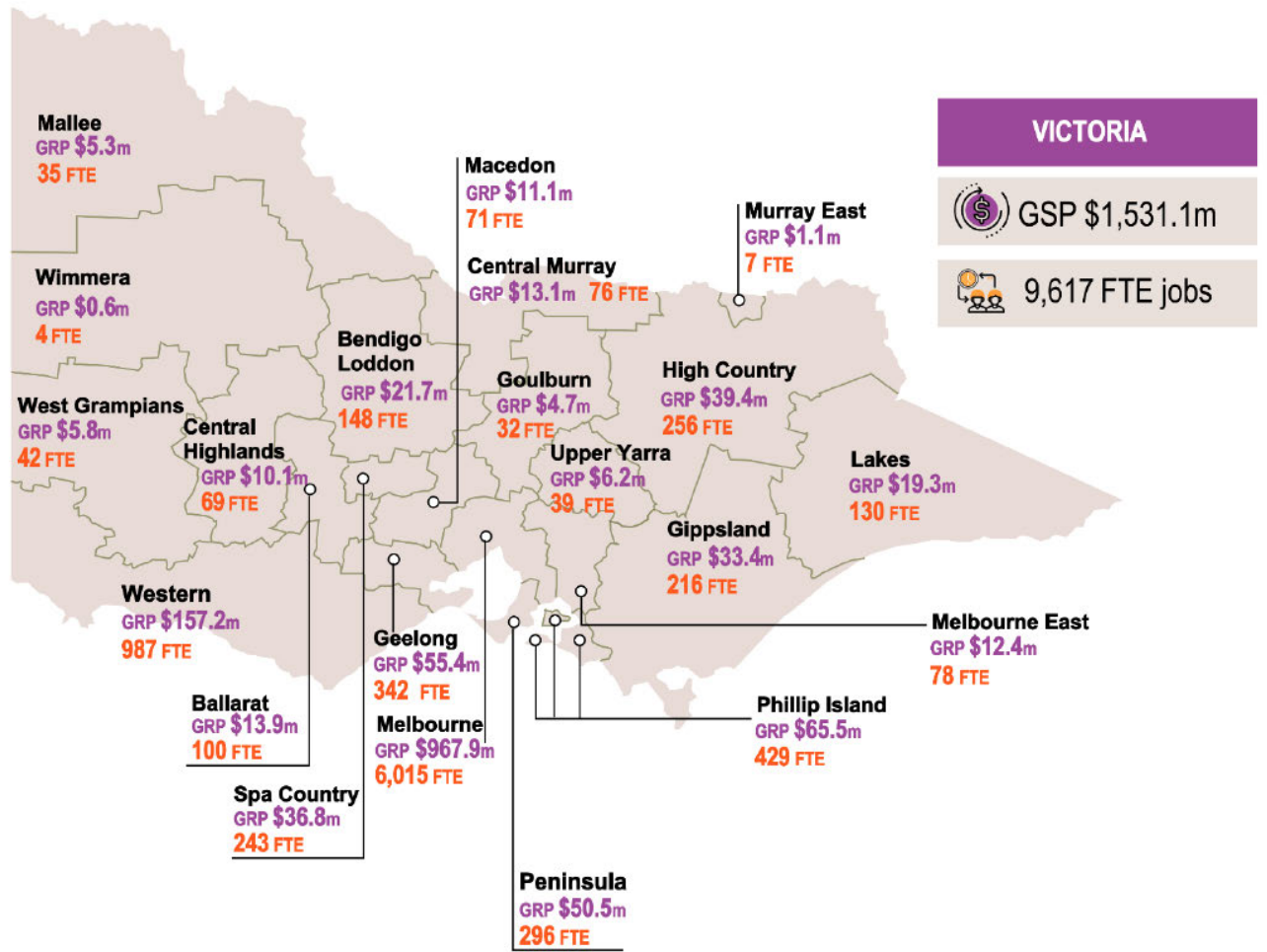
Figure 4 – Importance of STRA versus traditional accommodation by Victoria tourism region, FY2017-18

Region	STRA sector		Traditional accommodation		STRA as a share of traditional accommodation	
	Room nights booked	Revenue	Room nights booked	Revenue	Room nights booked	Revenue
	Number	A\$ million	Number	A\$ million	%	%
Ballarat	35,083	5.0	246,207	35.4	14.2	14.1
Bendigo Loddon	49,184	7.8	317,600	60.3	15.5	13.0
Central Highlands	25,417	4.3	174,484	33.2	14.6	13.0
Central Murray	16,512	5.3	158,634	30.1	10.4	17.7
Geelong	75,122	20.1	496,187	82.9	15.1	24.2
Gippsland	65,807	12.8	254,883	48.4	25.8	26.4
Goulburn	9,564	1.9	193,216	27.0	4.9	6.9
High Country	65,455	15.4	231,590	49.0	28.3	31.5
Lakes	40,303	7.8	233,591	34.2	17.3	22.8
Macedon	20,733	4.6	66,123	12.6	31.4	36.6
Mallee	11,391	2.1	287,900	34.0	4.0	6.1
Melbourne East	21,724	5.2	315,655	60.0	6.9	8.6
Murray East	2,708	0.4	86,701	16.5	3.1	2.4
Peninsula	58,246	20.2	281,979	54.1	20.7	37.3
Phillip Island	115,325	28.3	167,126	31.5	69.0	89.9
Spa Country	63,544	15.9	165,258	31.4	38.5	50.8
Upper Yarra	10,749	2.7	117,796	22.4	9.1	11.9
Western	229,655	60.5	415,155	70.4	55.3	86.0
Western Grampians	16,821	2.2	307,301	58.4	5.5	3.8%
Wimmera	2,145	0.2	44,864	8.5	4.8	2.9
Melbourne	1,200,672	278.5	10,205,036	1,893.5	11.8	14.7
Victoria	2,136,157	501.3	14,767,285	2,693.7	14.5	18.6

Note: "Traditional accommodation" refers to hotels, motels or serviced apartments with 10 rooms or more.
SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING

ACIL Allen also estimated the total economic contribution of the STRA sector to each of the Victoria's tourism regions and the full time equivalent (FTE) employment contribution, displayed in Figure 5 below. Regional areas of Victoria are estimated to underpin up to 40 per cent of the total economic and employment contribution of the STRA sector to the state. In absolute terms, the STRA sector made its greatest regional contribution to the economies of the Western tourism region (\$157.2 million and supporting up to 987 FTE jobs), and the Phillip Island tourism region (\$65.6 million and supporting up to 429 FTE jobs).

Figure 5 – STRA sector’s total economic contribution and employment by Victoria tourism region, FY2017-18



Note: GRP = Gross regional product. Equivalent to economic output as measured by GDP and GSP except at the regional level. The upper bound are calculated using the Total multipliers. FTE = full time equivalent. There are assumed to be no people directly employed by the STRA sector. Instead, the direct employment is estimated based on the assumption of 1.5 hours of own-supplied labour by hosts per booking night.

SOURCE: ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING

Discussion Paper Question: How can regions and businesses better cater to diverse visitor needs? What are the key accessibility challenges?

Overnight visitation is the most valuable form of tourism for regional Victoria when considered in terms of visitor spend. Tourists who stay overnight in a regional location spend more not only on accommodation but on local goods and services – cafes, restaurants, transportation, and entertainment. Overnight accommodation is a prime consideration for tourists when planning their holidays and a major part of the visitor experience. It follows that encouraging greater diversity in accommodation offerings – across price, style and location – is critical for regions and businesses to meet diverse visitor needs. This is a key feature of the STRA sector where each new listing is by its nature unique. Encouraging STRA can be a key “tool” to grow regional tourism as it boosts the accessibility and appeal of regional areas where there are fewer or no traditional accommodation options. As STRA allows for a diverse range of accommodation offerings at lower price points it opens up and encourages regional visitation from a larger pool of potential visitors.

Data analytics and segmentation will be critical in helping regional tourism operators meet the demand for personalised travel by allowing tourism offerings to be designed for and marketed directly to specific segments of travellers. Online STRA platforms, like Stayz, allow for the distribution of the regional Victorian holiday home inventory to global markets, boosting the inbound tourism opportunity and allowing visitors from all walks of life to find affordable and unique accommodation that meets their needs.

As overnight accommodation is a significant part of the visitor experience it is also one of the biggest accessibility challenges for tourists with specific accessibility needs. We recognise that not every accommodation offering on our platform will be fully accessible for people with disabilities but Stayz is conscious of providing options – through our diverse offerings – for all our customers’ needs. As such we provide a dedicated area of our website for wheelchair accessible accommodation with over 4400 wheelchair accessible properties around Australia. We work closely with disability advocates and organisations to ensure our platform and accommodation offerings meet the needs of people with disability.

Discussion Paper Question: How can we better leverage marketing spend to promote regional visitation?

Online platforms, like Stayz, are important in marketing Victorian travel experiences directly to specific segments of travellers and growing a wide and diverse tourism base. Online platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for Australian tourism businesses to market their offerings to the world. Working in collaboration with destinations and the service sector, there are real opportunities to use data-driven online platforms to promote Victoria and its regions globally and to people who have already identified a desire to visit. Here, data analytics and segmentation will be critical in helping tourism operators meet the demand for personalised travel by allowing tourism offerings to be designed for and marketed directly to specific segments of travellers.

Stayz partners with Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and Regional Tourism Authorities (RTAs) across Australia. In 2018, Stayz partnered with Destination New South

Wales, Visit Victoria and South Australia Tourism Commission DMO's on seven marketing campaigns to drive visitor growth and expenditure to destinations within their states and regions. Campaigns were predominately targeting regional destinations rather than urban centres, with a focus on increasing traveller trip frequency during non-peak season periods (e.g. Autumn/Spring).

Discussion Paper Question: What support does industry require to address the challenges and opportunities that technology and disruptors present?

In regional Victoria, short-term rentals have become a significant and growing segment of the tourism accommodation sector hosting over 935,000 nights of accommodation in 2017-18. This represents approximately 20.5 per cent of the total room nights at hotels, motels and serviced apartments in regional Victoria. STRA will play a vital role in helping achieve the Victorian Government's regional tourism goals and, due to its uniqueness in regional offerings, help Victoria effectively capitalise on the special features of the state. STRA is vital in ensuring visitors move beyond Melbourne and travel to Victoria's regional areas. However, the current arrangements across Victoria for STRA homeowners, guests and platforms alike have not delivered the regulatory certainty and coordination required to optimise its contribution to regional tourism.

We encourage both government and industry to take an open and collaborative approach to new tourism sectors and businesses – particularly technology and online businesses – and ensure they are able to fully contribute to tourism across the state. We recognise that with the growth of any new industry there is some disruption caused to traditional sectors and concerns raised by interest groups. We strongly believe that STRA and the traditional accommodation sectors are complementary, rather than in competition, and with the right regulatory settings in place, property rights, amenity issues and other community concerns can be addressed while ensuring the benefits are realised. Stayz believes a coordinated approach is needed to create consistent policies that ensure Victorians can benefit from the modern STRA industry through extra income and opportunity, tourists can access affordable and unique accommodation, and the unique needs of communities are met so they can benefit from sustainable tourism.

The growth of the sharing economy has come about through technology enabling people to make better use of their spare assets – empty houses and spare rooms. Rules and regulations specific to the sharing economy – like STRA – should protect consumers and communities without creating undue regulatory burden that stifles the shared benefits. Further, in regional areas, where tourism is often the main source of revenue for local businesses, any restrictions on STRA will have detrimental economic effects. We do not support one-size-fits-all regulations designed for inner-city problems. A more sophisticated and evidence-based approach to policy design and planning is required; and is demonstrably achievable.

We take this opportunity to raise the policies we've been working on in other Australian jurisdictions (especially, as highlighted below, NSW and Tasmania) which we think are best

suited to effectively meet community expectations while promoting economic growth and a healthy regional tourism sector in Victoria.

1. Compulsory and simple registration process for the whole STRA sector

Despite the STRA industry's strong growth, there continues to be little reliable quantitative information on the size and dynamics of the industry. The first step to managing STRA in Victoria is ensuring that there is the appropriate measurement and analysis of the sector's size and scope.

The only way we see this being achieved is through a state-wide, compulsory and simple registration system for all properties listed on a short-term rental accommodation platform. A well-designed register can collect meaningful sector data and contribute to an evidence base to inform sensible and easily understood policy for STRA. Working directly with STRA platforms, like Stayz, will provide governments and councils with verifiable and more accurate sector data and greater insights into the dynamics of the sector in regional areas. A state-wide approach to STRA regulation is called for so as not to geographically distort the market in Victoria.

Stayz has been at the forefront of discussions with state governments about the need for state registers and greater data collection and analysis. For example, the Tasmanian Parliament recently passed nation leading legislation establishing a partnership with industry that will for the first time paint a clear picture of short-term rentals across Tasmania. The NSW Government also is currently considering the introduction of a new industry-led STRA property register. Stayz has worked closely with the Tasmanian and New South Wales Governments on these initiatives and would welcome the opportunity to do so in Victoria.

2. Mandatory, detailed and enforceable industry code of conduct

Planning controls, including night limits, are a relatively blunt instrument for regulating STRA and in our experience have limited impact on addressing amenity issues and other community concerns. We believe that one of the most effective ways to ensure community concerns are addressed and to empower local councils and governments is to refine and expand a STRA code of conduct for owners, managers and guests, including an enforceable three strikes rule for those who do not meet the standards. Stayz is committed to leading this process and pushing for greater industry adoption.

We understand that some users of STRA – both hosts and guests – will misuse our platform and disregard the expectations of the communities in which they reside. That said, amenity, sense of community and safety issues are not limited to the provision of short-term rentals. We have no interest in hosts or guests using the Stayz platform who continually cause annoyance and concern to the surrounding communities and neighbourhoods. We understand that a proper recourse mechanism is essential to avoid vexatious complaints. As such, an important tool for enforcing our own standards and council and government regulations is through a 3 Strikes Rule which would ban platform users (both hosts and guests) who consistently cause disruption and disregard community expectations. The introduction of such a tool would have to be designed in close collaboration with councils,

governments and other online platforms to ensure appropriate complaint reporting mechanisms, investigation, decision and enforcement processes.

In June 2018, the NSW Government announced a new regulatory framework for STRA including a mandatory Code of Conduct that will apply to online booking platforms, letting agents, hosts and guests. A draft Code of Conduct has now been developed with input from key government agencies and an STRA Advisory Committee which consisted of industry, community and government stakeholders. We have been pleased with the approach taken in NSW and would welcome similar opportunities in Victoria.

3. New industry-funded and administered body

The establishment of a new largely industry-funded and administered body to enforce a Code of Conduct, quickly address problems and adjudicate questions about amenity, noise and overcrowding at short-term rental properties is called for.

There is no better tool available to ensure compliance by homeowners and guests than an ability to ban offenders from being able to market or book a property. This is exactly what online platforms like Stayz can do and they can do it more quickly and efficiently than any government implemented and managed compliance regime.

We believe it is incumbent upon and most certainly in the best interests of the STRA sector to have real mechanisms in place to ensure greater enforcement of the Code of Conduct, including through reporting and response arrangements and the delisting of properties that breach the code. Stayz is working to build a collaboration with the wider industry and stakeholders – particularly local and state governments and community groups – to devise and enforce a refreshed Code of Conduct that conveys appropriate responsibilities on homeowners, visitors and platforms to mitigate amenity issues and support safety. We would be pleased to partner with the state government, local councils and accommodation stakeholders in Victoria on this. We are currently working with the NSW Government and the wider industry on such an approach.

An opportunity for a leading, state-wide approach to regulating short-term rentals in Victoria

In December last year the Australian Government's Beyond Tourism 2020 Steering Committee submitted its report on the next long-term national tourism strategy to the year 2030. The Report identified that the sharing economy will be critical in supplementing accommodation supply to meet the future growth demand. Here, a valuable feature of STRA is its potential to act as the catalyst for the development of tourism in regional Australia – utilising existing infrastructure for accommodation purposes and leading to new opportunities for local businesses that thrive on new visitors. STRA doesn't require significant capital investment or government incentive packages to grow regional tourism and benefit regional businesses, communities, homeowners and visitors alike.

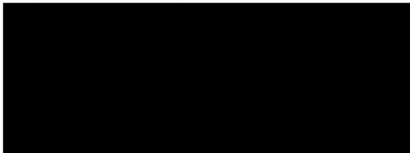
STRA will undoubtedly play a vital role in helping achieve the Victorian Government's vision for regional tourism. However, the current arrangements across Victoria for STRA homeowners, guests and platforms alike have not delivered the regulatory certainty and coordination required to optimise its positive contribution to regional tourism. This Review

presents a valuable opportunity to put forward strong policy and regulatory recommendations that can address community amenity and housing concerns, maximise the sectors contribution to regional tourism and the prosperity of regional Victoria.

We have welcomed the initiative taken by the NSW and Tasmanian governments on regulation that is beneficial for the entire sector, particularly regional tourism. Both schemes will collect verifiable sector data that can contribute to evidence-based policy and inform reviews such as this. Stayz has worked closely with both Governments on these initiatives and would welcome the opportunity to do so in Victoria.

Stayz commits to working with this Review and the Victorian Government to share our ideas, experience and knowledge on regional tourism, STRA and related issues. We welcome the opportunity to assist in any other ways requested and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,



Eacham Curry
Director, Government & Corporate Affairs
Stayz