



Submission: Tasmanian Housing Strategy

Airbnb welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this timely development of Tasmania's 20-year housing strategy, building on the record investment made by the Tasmanian Government in the supply of social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives.

About Airbnb

Airbnb was born in 2007 when two Hosts welcomed three guests to their San Francisco home, and has since grown to 4 million Hosts who have welcomed more than 1.4 billion guest arrivals across over 220 countries and regions. Travel on Airbnb keeps more of the financial benefits of tourism with the people and places that make it happen. Airbnb has generated billions of dollars in earnings for Hosts, 90 percent of whom are individuals listing the homes in which they live.

Airbnb in Tasmania

Modelling by Oxford Economics has previously found that guests who stayed in Airbnb spent \$364 million in Tasmania overall, supporting 3,200 jobs across the state.¹ In addition to visitor spending, the home sharing economy is supporting the growth of ancillary services and the creation of local jobs — such as domestic cleaning, gardening and property management — facilitated by over one third of surveyed hosts (37 percent) on Airbnb in Australia who prefer to engage professional services to manage their listings and bookings.²

Importantly, Airbnb also plays a crucial role in helping people remain in their homes and communities by providing them with the ability to supplement their income. In a survey of Australian Hosts on Airbnb in 2021, a third of respondents said the primary reason they started hosting was to 'make ends meet'.³ In turn, these Hosts help drive economic growth and job creation, with many local businesses relying on the valuable tourism dollars spent by Airbnb guests. Moreover, the supplemental income earned through home sharing empowers Tasmanian women and older or retired persons to remain in their homes and communities — 67 percent of Airbnb Hosts in Tasmania are women and over 30 percent of Hosts are 60 years or older.⁴ As the cost of living increases, home sharing provides an economic lifeline for everyday Tasmanians in helping to make ends meet.

Airbnb continues to support the statewide regulatory framework for short stay accommodation in Tasmania. Booking platforms, including Airbnb, continue to share data with the State Government which in turn helps to ensure that policy settings are fit-for-purpose and appropriately calibrated. As noted in the draft Housing Strategy, short stay accommodation plays a critical role in the

¹ Oxford Economics, The Economic Impact of Airbnb in APAC: an independent report by Oxford Economics, commissioned by Airbnb, pp. 23-28. Figures in 2019 prices.

² Airbnb survey data. Survey conducted in January 2020 of 1,612 Hosts with listings on Airbnb in Australia.

³ Survey dates from Feb 1, 2021 to Mar 3, 2021 for Homes Hosts in Australia who hosted a trip during 2020.

⁴ Internal Airbnb as at 1 April 2022.

state's economy, both urban and rural and remote communities and this must continue for the benefit of all Tasmanians. Our view is that the Tasmanian Government remains best placed to have oversight of the sector to ensure that regulatory settings are holistic in reflecting community needs.

Short-stay accommodation and the housing market

At its core, the issue of housing is challenging and complicated. The causes of housing or rental availability and affordability differ from place to place, with legacy factors – which often pre-date the founding of Airbnb by decades – ranging from the supply of new homes, the ratio of affordable to social housing stock, demographic changes, the number of empty dwellings and rooms, shrinking household sizes, migration, interest rates, as well as state and federal policy and broader economic conditions. These factors have been growing steadily since before Airbnb was founded.

In this environment, Airbnb is a very small percentage of the overall housing stock in Tasmania. A robust regulatory framework for short stay has operated across the state since 2019 that consists of quarterly data sharing obligations on booking platforms and a requirement that Hosts obtain a permit in their local government area. The data sharing arrangements with the Tasmanian Government, in particular, ensures that clear and accurate data about the short stay market is regularly reported. The most recent published (aggregated) data notes that the number of “premises listings has remained relatively stable,” with 47.9% of short stay properties being the homeowner's primary residence.⁵ This data also demonstrates that short-stay properties which are not the property-owner's primary residence comprise just one percent of Tasmania's housing stock.

We also note that holiday home ownership has long been a tradition in Tasmania, including shacks and other coastal properties. We know that many Australians place their holiday home on Airbnb during the times that they are not using it themselves, for example when they are visiting family or friends interstate for a few weeks. For many Tasmanians, the income earned through hosting on platforms like Airbnb allow Hosts to pay for everyday expenses, or the upkeep of their properties, and even to help afford rising living costs. In a recent survey, more than a third of Australian Airbnb Hosts said one of the reasons they host is to earn money to help cover the rising cost of living, with almost four in 10 responding that hosting income has helped them stay in their home.⁶

For this reason, it is highly unlikely that many short stay properties that are the owners non-primary residence would ever be placed into the long-term rental market. There are myriad use-cases for short stay accommodation for both Hosts and guests and sharing a property for long-term rental in most cases does not allow for these circumstances.

⁵ CBOS, [Report on Data Collection](#), Q3, 2022.

⁶ Airbnb Hosts booked between 1 June 2021 - 31 Dec 2021 and surveyed between 17 Feb 2022 - 31 March 2022.

For example, we know of essential workers (such as nurses and medical professionals) who live outside of Hobart and use short stay accommodation to stay in close proximity to their workplaces when on night shift, and others who use short stay accommodation to be closer to medical facilities when seeking regular treatment or care, whether for themselves or vulnerable family members. We also know of tradespeople in the construction industry that utilise short stay accommodation to live whilst working on a project away from their primary home. The cost of staying in, and availability of, traditional accommodation during these short, but regular stays is prohibitive for many and platforms like Airbnb provide cost effective options that suit their particular needs. It goes without saying that sharing a property on the long-term rental market may not provide the necessary flexibility for owners who may have particular needs throughout the year.

With these factors in mind, we consider that any future housing strategy must be cognisant of the important role that short stay accommodation plays in the market. It is crucial to ensure there is a healthy mix of accommodation and housing typologies in Tasmania to suit the current and future needs of the population.

A [recent report](#) published by Arup, commissioned by Airbnb, stated that meaningful action to diversify housing typologies may be an effective path forward in the context of ensuring our urban environments are fit-for-purpose and responsive to the changing ways people are now living and working. It said that ‘as workers and travelers are now seeking to use city spaces in multiple ways (including new forms of accommodation), planners may consider permanent, temporary and affordable housing, as well as adaptive reuse or short-term stay policies, to encourage housing offerings that meet a variety of needs across a diverse spectrum’.⁷ Such an approach would help to ensure the mix of housing options for citizens are appropriate in meeting their needs, whilst receptive to future trends.

As noted, while short stay accommodation provided by platforms like Airbnb generally comprises a tiny proportion of the overall property market, and an even smaller proportion of the rental market, we are keen to help [find ways](#) to make a positive contribution to housing issues and help build stronger communities. In October 2022, Airbnb proposed a series of measures that will help build stronger communities, foster sustainable tourism growth, and equip governments across Australia with tools to help address important issues, such as housing affordability and amenity.

[These proposed measures](#) include:⁸

- The introduction of mandatory, industry-wide statewide registration systems in states and territories that don’t currently have them. Transparency over the number and location of listings is vital to understanding the industry, and for governments to be able to make informed policy decisions.

⁷ [‘Evolving urban destinations in Asia-Pacific’](#), Arup, commissioned by Airbnb, June 2023, p.12.

⁸ [‘Airbnb proposes new measures to help build sustainable travel and stronger communities in Australia’](#), 12 Oct 2022.

- It should be noted that Tasmania already has high levels of data transparency created by the existing registration and data sharing arrangements mentioned above.
- The introduction of statewide Codes of Conduct that establish clear standards of behaviour for all industry participants — guests, Hosts and short-stay platforms.
- Support for a sustainable tourism levy to fund community infrastructure — for example, key worker housing projects — in communities which face unique challenges created by over-tourism. Airbnb proposes that these levies would work most effectively on an opt-in basis at the local government level and applied to all accommodation providers to fund much-needed community infrastructure and services; for example, key worker housing projects.
- Support for appropriate eviction protection reviews in states and territories where required, to identify any potential shortcomings in the regulatory frameworks that protect tenants.

As a company with housing affordability and cost of living needs in our roots, Airbnb welcomes any opportunity to work constructively with local and state governments to support the development of evidence-based policy settings that deliver positive outcomes for local jobs, the broader economy and a diverse group of stakeholders.

Conclusion

Airbnb acknowledges and appreciates the Tasmanian Government's ongoing action to help boost the overall supply of new and affordable housing, which ultimately would serve as one of the most important long-term and strategic solutions in responding to the pressures in the housing market.