

Short Stay Rental Accommodation (SSRA) Local Law

Key Themes from Community Feedback 2023/24

These key themes and summaries capture the multifaceted perspectives and complex dynamics surrounding short-term rentals in the Alpine Shire.

They reflect the diverse concerns, ranging from economic considerations to community well-being, and underscore the need for balanced and inclusive approaches to address the challenges posed by short-term rental properties.

1. Economic Contribution and Local Business Support

"The towns economy is being bolstered by these short term rentals. Take them away or force them to close and the town and its occupants lose business and jobs."

Respondents strongly emphasised the economic significance of short-term rentals in the Shire – particularly in Bright. They highlighted how these rentals play a crucial role in supporting various local businesses, from hospitality to trades. The feedback underscored that a thriving tourism sector, enabled by short-term rentals, is essential for the town's overall prosperity. Many noted that any restrictions or additional charges imposed on these rentals could have a detrimental impact on the economic ecosystem of the area.

2. Housing Affordability and Availability

"There is a house crisis in Dinner Plain for year-round locals who do not own property."

The feedback shed light on the pressing issue of housing affordability and availability, particularly for year-round locals and staff members. Respondents expressed concerns about rising property values and rents, partly attributed to the presence of short-term rentals. They pointed out that this situation makes it challenging for residents to find affordable housing, leading to a potential exodus of community members. The impact on staff retention in key sectors like hospitality was also highlighted.

3. Community Impact and Quality of Life

"Having the property next door as a holiday rental impacts us in every aspect. We do not know who is going to be in the house next to us from day to day."

There were significant concerns raised about the community impact and quality of life due to short-term rentals. Residents shared experiences of noise disturbances, lack of predictability due to frequent turnover of renters, and a sense of intrusion into the neighbourhood's character. The feedback highlighted the need for better regulation to address issues such as property damage, disturbance of peace, and ensuring a harmonious coexistence between short-term renters and permanent residents.

4. Regulation and Responsibility

"These are private properties. You can't have one set of rules for a short term rental but allow long term renters to get away with different rules."

The feedback emphasised the importance of fair and consistent regulation across all types of rental properties. Respondents called for greater accountability and monitoring, not only for short-term rentals but also for long-term ones. There was a clear desire for a level playing field where all property owners, regardless of rental duration, adhere to similar standards and responsibilities. The need for proactive measures to address antisocial behaviour, regardless of residency status, was also highlighted.

5. Tourism Impact and Regional Development

"The alternative of retaining my house solely for my own holiday use would see this contribution to local economic activity cease."

The role of short-term rentals in driving tourism and supporting regional development was a key theme. Owners and stakeholders pointed out that these rentals contribute significantly to the local economy through guest spending, job creation, and support for related industries such as property management and maintenance. There were concerns that excessive regulations or deterrents could impact tourism numbers and the overall appeal of Brighton as a destination, affecting not just property owners but the broader community reliant on tourism-related income.

Smaller Key Themes

Among the detailed feedback, several smaller key themes emerged that added nuance to the broader discussions about short-term rentals in the Alpine Shire.

Noise and Disturbances:

Some respondents highlighted specific issues related to noise disturbances caused by short-term rental guests, including late-night activities, loud conversations, and disruptive behaviour. These disturbances were seen as impacting the quality of life for permanent residents.

Property Maintenance and Aesthetics:

There were mentions of differences in property upkeep between short-term rental properties and permanent residences. Some argued that short-term rentals are often better maintained and contribute positively to the overall aesthetics of the area.

Impact on Staff Housing:

Several comments touched upon the challenge of finding affordable housing for staff members, particularly in the hospitality sector. The presence of short-term rentals was perceived as exacerbating the housing shortage for local workers.

Community Consultation and Engagement:

Concerns were raised about the lack of community consultation regarding the establishment and operation of short-term rental properties. Some felt that their voices were not heard in decision-making processes that affected their neighbourhoods.

Regulation Effectiveness:

Questions were raised about the effectiveness of existing regulations and enforcement mechanisms, especially regarding noise, parking, and property maintenance standards. There were calls for stricter enforcement to address issues promptly.

Property Owner Perspectives:

The feedback included perspectives from property owners who use short-term rentals as a source of income or investment. Their views highlighted the financial considerations, regulatory burdens, and economic benefits associated with these rentals.

Affordability Challenges:

Comments touched upon the broader housing affordability challenges in the region, not solely attributed to short-term rentals but also influenced by market dynamics, government policies, and population growth.

Introduction of a SSRA Local Law

Support for vs against

The breakdown of feedback regarding the new local law on short-term rentals in the Shire was diverse, reflecting a range of perspectives and opinions.

Support for the New Local Law

Economic Benefits: Some respondents highlighted the economic benefits brought by short-term rentals, such as supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and contributing to the overall prosperity of the area.

"The town's economy is being bolstered by these short-term rentals. Take them away or force them to close and the town and its occupants lose business and jobs."

Flexibility and Use of Properties: Others appreciated the flexibility that short-term rentals offered in terms of property use, allowing them to use their properties for personal use while also generating income.

"The financial returns of holiday rental are not too dissimilar to permanent rental once all outgoings and maintenance Capex are included. The only advantage is own use."

Regulatory Balance: Some respondents acknowledged the need for regulations but advocated for a balanced approach that considers the economic benefits and contributions of short-term rentals.

"It's vital to maintaining the current 'vibe' of the town into the future."

Opposition to the New Local Law

Community Impact: Several respondents expressed concerns about the negative impact of short-term rentals on the community, citing issues such as noise, disturbances, parking problems, and changes in the neighbourhood's character.

"The property next door as a holiday rental impacts us in every aspect. We do not know who is going to be in the house next to us from day to day."

Housing Affordability: Some feedback touched on the broader issue of housing affordability and how short-term rentals might exacerbate rental shortages or drive up property prices, making it harder for locals to find affordable housing.

"Countless locals have had to move out of Bright, therefore it's difficult to find staff as the working class is being forced out."

Regulatory Concerns: A few respondents expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of additional regulations, raising questions about enforcement, fairness, and potential unintended consequences.

"Raising costs for SSRAs just means SSRAs will increase their nightly prices which will reduce tourism and customers to the area."

Inclusions in the Local Law

Based on the community feedback, here are some of the most popular suggestions for additional or preferred regulations to be included in a new local law regarding short-stay rental accommodations.

Noise Restrictions: Implementing clear and enforceable noise restrictions to address disturbances caused by guests in SSRA properties, particularly late at night.

Occupancy Limits: Setting maximum occupancy limits for SSRA properties to prevent overcrowding and potential issues like parties or large gatherings.

Waste Management: Requiring SSRA property owners to manage waste responsibly, including recycling and proper disposal of rubbish, to minimise environmental impact.

Complaint Handling Mechanism: Establishing a 24/7 contact or reporting system for neighbors to report noise or behaviour complaints related to SSRA properties.

Pet Regulations: Enforcing regulations regarding pets in SSRA properties, including not leaving pets unattended and ensuring they do not cause a nuisance to neighbours.

Registration and Compliance: Requiring SSRA property owners to register their properties and comply with all building codes and safety standards, similar to residential tenancy requirements.

Fairness and Transparency: Ensuring fairness and transparency in the regulation process, including clear communication with property owners and consideration of the economic impact on the local community.

Commercial Rate for SSRA Properties

Several respondents commented on the commercial rates already applied to their SSRA properties. Feedback received included the key themes and comments below.

Financial Burden: Many respondents expressed concern about the financial burden posed by the commercial rates applied to their SSRA properties. They highlighted that these rates were already significant and contributed substantially to their operational costs.

"What does Council use the Commercial rates I pay on my holiday rental property for?"

Economic Contributions: Some respondents pointed out that despite paying commercial rates, they believed their SSRA properties contributed positively to the local economy by supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and attracting tourists who spend money in the area.

"All our trades and manager for the property are local businesses."

Impact on Viability: There were concerns about the impact of further increases in rates or additional regulations on the viability of SSRA properties. Respondents mentioned that higher costs could lead to increased prices for guests, potentially reducing tourism and affecting their income.

"Raising costs for SSRAs just means SSRAs will increase their nightly prices which will reduce tourism and customers to the area."

Lack of Support: Some respondents felt that despite paying commercial rates, they did not receive adequate support or recognition from local authorities, particularly during challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic or natural disasters like bushfires.

"Sadly there has been no Council support forthcoming to this type of business during impacts of Covid or bushfire or flood to help offset losses from no income."