

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
140 William Street
PERTH WA 6000
Via email: tourism@dplh.wa.gov.au

3 March 2022

To whom it may concern,

Response to draft Position Statement: Planning for Tourism

The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association (MRBTA) is a self-funded, not-for-profit, incorporated association with over 50 years' experience in supporting the Margaret River Region to thrive through tourism. Our vision for tourism in the Margaret River Region is to delight visitors, stimulate the economy and contribute to the social, cultural, environmental and Aboriginal health and vitality of our region.

MRBTA has a deep understanding of tourism, through its unique business model which allows it to perform the functions of both Australia's largest Local Tourism Organisation (LTO), and of the largest tourism operator in the Margaret River Region. As the region's tourism association, MRBTA acts on behalf of 700 members whilst providing marketing, visitor servicing and product development to support the success of tourism businesses. As a tourism operator, MRBTA manages eight tourism attractions – Lake, Mammoth, Jewel and Ngilgi Caves, Cape Leewin and Cape Naturaliste Lighthouses, Eagles Heritage and Forest Adventures – and provides ground handling services at the Busselton Margaret River Airport. Funds generated are used to conserve the natural and heritage assets in the Association's care and underpin the work of the tourism association.

The Margaret River Region (defined by the City of Busselton and Shire of Augusta) is the most visited region in Western Australia outside the City of Perth, attracting 1.6 million visitors annually. Tourism is a significant industry, and pre-Covid employed one in five people, and contributed more than \$2 billion to the South West economy. The region's tourism brand is built on providing high quality, memorable and enjoyable experiences, and further strengthening this reputation will be vital as the region seeks to attract a greater proportion of high value travellers.

Short term rental accommodation supply in the Margaret River Region has grown significantly over the past decade and is an important part of the region's overall product and experience mix. MRBTA views considered regulation of this sector imperative to ensure that visitors have a quality experience, that negative impacts on residents are minimised, and that competition with other short term accommodation providers is fair.

The MRBTA supports the premise outlined in the *Draft Position Statement: Planning for Tourism*, that local governments are best placed to plan for tourism within their communities due to their local knowledge of tourism activity, opportunity, constraints, including potential impacts and what requirements if any, should be placed on tourism proposals.

The MRBTA commends the City of Busselton's review of their Holiday Home Regulatory Framework which has included robust community consultation to ensure the interests of various stakeholders are understood and balanced. The MRBTA supports the directions for change the City has proposed.

There are two items in the *Draft Position Statement: Planning for Tourism* the MRBTA does not support:

1. The proposed exemption for short term rental accommodation for a period less than 60 days.

This measure will undermine the local government's current regulation efforts, pose a potential safety risk to visitors (particularly where homes are in bushfire prone areas), and increase the likelihood of negative impacts on surrounding residents.

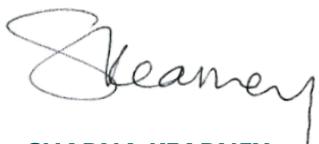
2. The zoning of all current and future caravan parks as 'Special Use – Caravan Park'.

The region has an ample supply of caravan park accommodation, and this measure will prevent the use of this land for other tourism-based opportunities which may be desirable at a future point in time.

The MRBTA is supportive of a state-wide registration scheme for short term accommodation to the extent it increases the onus on online accommodation advertising platforms to only promote approved accommodation. However, the registration scheme should not undermine the local government's regulatory frameworks or duplicate the compliance requirements for short term rental accommodation providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact maureen.kollman@margaretriver.com or (08) 9780 5904 should you wish to discuss any element of this submission in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



SHARNA KEARNEY
JOINT CEO- GROUP MANAGER MARKETING