

SUBMITTER'S EVIDENCE FOR STAGE 2 HEARINGS QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN – VISITOR ACCOMMODATION

BRIEF HISTORY

In 2004 QLDC ran an aggressive campaign of threat and intimidation against owners of properties in Queenstown who advertised their properties for short-stay rental.

[The then definition of Visitor Accommodation in the District Plan came about via Environment Court Hearing ref C100/2000 in which the subject of the hearing was the definition of Homestay.

The Court requested the Council amend that definition as part of it was a nonsense. However the Council went further and also amended the definition of Visitor Accommodation from “does not include the letting of individually-owned residential units” to “does not exclude ...”

It is clear the Court recognised this was contrary to their instructions but negligently failed to correct this.]

As a result of a complaint made to the Office of the Ombudsmen the Council was ordered to stop its actions against owners who were short-stay letting. (Ombudsmen Ref C8302)

The Council made assurances that it would (1) cease all action against owners and (2) also said it was considering future changes to the District Plan which would go through the prescribed process.

However, contrary to those assurances given to the Ombudsmen, the Council continued to send letters to owners of properties that it suspected to be short-stay letting. Some of those properties were in fact being used for long-term residential rental.

Eventually in 2008 Hearings were held re amending the relevant part of the District Plan (Plan Change 22 – Definition of Visitor Accommodation).

The Hearings were presided over by 3 Councillors 'acting' as Independent Commissioners.

Several Hearings were held and at the final Hearing an impromptu meeting was held between the Councillors and some of those present in which an 'agreed solution' was made resulting in the current District Plan rules. Of course those who had attended the earlier Hearings had no say!

In addition the 3 Councillors refused point-blank to visit a sample of properties being short-stay let - - which were of course the subject of the hearings they were presiding over.

MISUSE OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

At no point in the past or current District Plan processes has there been any measurement of the use of resources (eg water) comparing usage when a single dwelling is owner-occupied vs long-term residential rental vs short-stay rental. The reality is that there is no material difference. Therefore there are no adverse effects to mitigate.

Additionally there has always been a (deliberate?) failure to recognise that there is a difference between a single dwelling and the multi-room/unit and sometimes also multi-storey complexes that hotels and motels are.

The requirements to obtain a Resource Consent, pay increased rates & pay Reserve Contributions if using a single dwelling for short-stay lets fails to recognise that there is no increased demand on Council's infrastructure from when the same dwelling was used for other purposes.

Regardless of whether a single dwelling is owner-occupied, long-term rental or short-stay let, there is no material difference in residential character, appearance & general amenity.

In Queenstown there is a regular large turnover of tenants particularly due to people coming for the ski season. This means that residential rentals often last only 6 months or less and the tenants are often tourists who work during their stay. Therefore even the so-called long-term residential tenancy market is often catering to tourists.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

The Council appears to be partly motivated by a claimed lack of residential rental accommodation. The reality is that there is a shortage of APPROPRIATE residential accommodation.

The tourist industry and particularly the Hotels use (generally) young people from overseas as a cheap source of labour. However they do not provide accommodation for them. (An owner of 2 large hotels in Queenstown was recently quoted as exclusively employing staff from overseas).

There needs to be dormitory style accommodation provided at reasonable cost to house this influx of cheap labour. Due to the exodus of commercial companies from the CBD there have been vacant buildings sitting around unoccupied in the last few years eg Carters building in Gorge Rd.

The claim that using dwellings for short-stay lets is removing them from the long-term residential market is a specious argument. It is just as likely that they will be left vacant instead. Being left vacant also removes the property from the long-term residential market.

VEHICLE MOVEMENTS

It astounds me that it is claimed there is a problem regarding vehicle movements that needs mitigating.

How many vehicles do you take (or hire) when you go on holiday? Answer - probably 1.

How many vehicles are there at your home ? Answer - 2, 3, 4?

It would be unusual to have more than 6 vehicle movements per day at a single dwelling used for short-stay lets. Say 2 trips during the day for sightseeing & activities plus 1 trip out for dinner.

The average per day would be less. In some cases the guest would not even use a vehicle.

Again it appears that the difference between hotels/motels (with multiple rooms/units and multiple parties of guests with multiple vehicles as well as staff and service vehicles) and single dwellings is deliberately being ignored.

In fact even owner-occupied dwellings and long term rentals are more likely to have multiple vehicles and more vehicle movements than a single dwelling that is short-stay let.

NOISE

From my 20 years experience the known 'party houses' in Queenstown have been either long-term rentals or owner-occupied & definitely not short-stay lets.

STATISTICS

The Council is making a big issue out of the statistic that there is a greater percentage of dwellings used for short-stay lets than other parts of the country. Queenstown = tourism. The same will be true for the proportion of businesses in the tourism industry etc.

Brian REEVE 6 August 2018

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