



STRA Register: A Litmus Test for Council Credibility on Tourism

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If councils sincerely believe they have a tourism funding problem, then it's time for them to properly step up and support calls for a national register of short-term rental accommodation (STRA).

For the last four years there has been unanimous backing for such a register across New Zealand's entire accommodation sector including hotels, motels, holiday parks, hostels, Expedia, and yes, even Airbnb. That public alignment amongst competitors should not be ignored.

STRA is a valued accommodation option and fully established within the tourism ecosystem. No one is trying to have STRA banned. However, without basic transparency, we're flying blind when it comes to tourism policymaking.

Councils routinely say they want better tourism data. They worry about housing supply. They struggle with enforcement. They run costly rating systems while large swathes of commercial accommodation escape the net. In recent times, councils have also repeatedly called for the power to create new local bed taxes without knowing who would be liable to pay.

Let's be blunt: if local councils are serious about fixing tourism funding, a national register of STRA is the obvious first step. Overseas jurisdictions have already shown us what good looks like.

In November 2023, the European Union adopted new legislation requiring STRA platforms to share detailed

booking data with member states and local authorities. This move wasn't driven by hostility toward platforms. Instead, it was about balancing innovation with public policy goals: housing access, tax fairness and reliable data. EU legislators described it as "ending a black box era" and enabling cities to manage tourism responsibly.

New South Wales in Australia introduced its state-wide STRA register back in 2020. This is not a heavy-handed regime. Hosts simply provide basic details and agree to fire safety and planning rules. The NSW government wanted a consistent regime to support tourism while protecting communities.

New Zealand can learn from both examples. A national STRA register will not solve all our tourism infrastructure challenges, but it's foundational. It unlocks better decisions around transport, events, housing and climate resilience. Critically, councils can use the register to identify the commercial beneficiaries from tourism and whether they are adequately contributing (or not) to funding solutions.

None of this means demonising platforms like Airbnb and Booking.com, both of which have engaged positively with policymakers and traditional accommodation providers. Airbnb is used to STRA registers elsewhere and, understandably, simply wants to mirror best practice once across the entire country.

I have long argued that good tourism policy begins with robust data and a willingness to compare ourselves

with overseas best practice. Based on tensions arising in destinations such as Barcelona and New York, we already know where things are headed in this country if we sweep STRA issues under the carpet.

The national register is a modest step toward fairer cost-sharing, better community outcomes, and greater regulatory clarity. It's not about banning anything. It's

about knowing what's out there, so we can respond intelligently.

The accommodation sector stands ready. If councils want meaningful partnership with industry on regulatory reform, this is the moment to prove it. Not with slogans claiming generic "support for tourism," but with concrete backing for the tools that allow smarter policymaking.



Disclosure

As well as being principal of [Fantail Advisory](#), James Doolan is Strategic Director of [Hotel Council Aotearoa](#) (HCA). HCA is the industry association for New Zealand's hotel sector. Since its inception in 2020, HCA has repeatedly lobbied central and local government – and other tourism industry stakeholders – to support wholesale reform of New Zealand tourism industry funding. HCA has also consistently opposed ad hoc and inconsistent localised funding solutions such as Auckland's APTR, Queenstown's push for a separate regional bed tax and/or including local bed taxes as part of the City & Regional Deals regime. In a touring destination such as New Zealand, localised bed taxes are inefficient and a terrible visitor experience.