



**Tourism House, 17 Trevenna Street, Sunnyside. Private Bag X 424, PRETORIA · 0001
Tel + 27 (0) 12 444 6000· Fax + 27 (0) 12 444 7000. Call Center: 0860 121 929**

Tourism Minister and Airbnb meet on proposed regulation for short-term home rentals

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Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom met with representatives of the global online accommodation-booking platform – Airbnb to discuss various policy issues, in particular the regulation of short-term home rentals.

The meeting took place in the context of the current call for public comment on the Tourism Amendment Bill, published on 15 April 2019, to provide stakeholders an opportunity to make submissions.

The Tourism Amended Draft Bill aims, amongst others, to address the regulatory vacuum on short-term rentals by defining short-term home rentals as “the renting or leasing on a temporary basis, for reward, of a dwelling or a part thereof, to a visitor.” It also seeks to enable the Minister of Tourism to determine thresholds regarding short-term home rentals, through a notice in the Government Gazette.

“The Amendment Draft Bill in its current form proposes that the Minister of Tourism be empowered to determine such thresholds. We urge our stakeholders to submit their comments, to enable us to strengthen the Bill in order to serve the interest of inclusive tourism growth in South Africa” - said Mr Victor Tharage, Director-General for the Department of Tourism.

Airbnb shared information on a range of global trends and approaches adopted in various countries, states and cities where they operate. There was also an acknowledgment of the need for a proactive legislative and policy response underscored by sound destination management and interventions aimed at enhancing the visitor experience.

Minister Hanekom welcomed the spirit of the discussion and cooperation from Airbnb, and further appreciated their commitment to contribute constructively to the legislative review processes, in support of our country’s tourism development growth objectives.

“We welcome Airbnb and other game changing innovations that are opening up new markets for destinations, offering travelers affordable holidays, and allowing smaller industry players to thrive. Many of these are able to flourish through the ease of use of shared-economy platforms”, said Minister Hanekom.

Enquiries:

Mr Blessing Manale
Chief Director Communications and Departmental Spokesperson
Department of Tourism
Telephone: +27 (0) 12 444 6607
Cell: +27 (0) 66 487 8867
Email: bmanale@tourism.gov.za

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