

MEDIA RELEASE

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**ACCOMMODATION SECTOR WELCOMES MOVES TO STAMP OUT DECEPTIVE
ONLINE BOOKING CONDUCT**

Tourism Accommodation Australia has welcomed moves by the UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) against six online hotel booking agencies (OTAs) in a bid to stamp out hidden charges, deceptive conduct, pressure selling and other misleading claims.

The CMA targeted Expedia, Hotels.com, Booking.com, Trivago, ebookers and Agoda in a lengthy investigation. All have agreed to voluntarily comply with a range of measures to increase transparency (although not all six were found to have engaged in the practices).

TAA CEO Carol Giuseppi said the Australian accommodation sector welcomed the CMA action and its scope across numerous agencies.

"Practices such as 'bait and switch', discount claims, hidden charges and other potential false, misleading or deceptive conduct such as 'was/now' pricing' should have no place in the accommodation sector," she said.

"Unfortunately, they have been common worldwide and we believe the CMA action should be adopted globally. In Australia, the ACCC is testing the case on misleading advertising by instituting proceedings in the Federal Court against Trivago - and we await further action on the broader issues.

"The CMA can be commended for acting quickly to obtain formal undertakings from the six OTAs and for requiring action by 1 September. However, given no legal action has been undertaken, it's unclear how OTA behaviour will be monitored for compliance long-term."

She said other issues also needed to be looked at when it came to OTAs.

"The CMA to date has not addressed, nor has it flagged its intention to address, other issues which have been central to our advocacy in Australia," Ms Giuseppi said.

"In particular, unfair contracts and the issue of the legality of rate parity. With regards to the latter we believe owners and operators of the asset should be allowed to compete freely with OTAs by offering lower rates to all customers across all online and offline channels.

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