

Residents blow torch on city council to end illegal short stays in apartments

Council 'ignoring' alleged Airbnb

Taylah Fellows

Chair of the Saratoga Woolstore Apartments in Teneriffe Jackie Grady has accused Brisbane City Council of turning a blind eye to an investor unit owner who was allegedly listing her apartment on the Airbnb website while claiming it was a bed and breakfast.

Ms Grady says she was forced to ring the council and prove that the unit was being used as an Airbnb.

"Her unit is just booked all of the time, she's making an absolute killing," Ms Grady said.

"Council told me it was an Airbnb and that the owner lives in the apartment and I said, no she doesn't live there. They just said, prove it.

"We've sent through the Airbnb listings, where it says the entire three-bedroom apartment is available. We sent through reviews of people staying there. We supplied photos, everything, and they still didn't do anything about it. I don't know what else we could do."

A council spokesman said while not all short-stay hosts needed development approval, those disobeying the rules would have their property rates adjusted to the more expensive short-stay rates - if the council was provided with "appropriate supporting evidence" that it was an Airbnb.

"While it is an offence under the Planning Act 2016 to carry out assessable development without a permit or to use a premises unlawfully, whether an owner using a property for short-term accommodation has committed an offence depends on the individual planning requirements of each site," he said.

There are currently 40 short-stay properties in Teneriffe that have registered with the council's self-reporting system.



Alan Radbone, Jackie Grady, Sandra Gay, Bruce Grady and Belinda Perry, from Saratoga Apartments. Security footage (top) of the secret short stays. Picture: Steve Pohlner

Waterfront's bad Air days

Taylah Fellows

Body corporate members of two separate waterfront apartment blocks in Brisbane have blown the whistle on secret Airbnbs, claiming Brisbane City Council has been ignoring community complaints about the illegal short stays for months.

Treasurer of the Saratoga Woolstore Apartments in Teneriffe, Jackie Grady, and chairperson of the Spice Apartments in South Brisbane, Bronwyn Price, each informed council of multiple unit owners illegally subletting through the Airbnb website up to seven months ago, with council yet to take any action.

It comes after the council last year encouraged Brisbane

residents to do on their short-stay neighbours who would then be subject to higher rates, in an attempt to rein in the number of residents switching their properties from the long to short-term rental market.

Fed up residents and their bodies corporate have now engaged legal help to force council to take action on the rogue short-stay hosts, claiming they were negatively affecting buying power, insurance premiums and home security.

"It must have been before October when we started this and none of us have had a reply of any description, apart from (council) asking us to give them proof," Ms Grady said. "We gave them photos, online listing descriptions, online reviews of people staying

here and we still can't get a response.

"You have a building that doesn't want Airbnb in here and they're totally ignoring us. I just don't get it."

Brisbane City Council is the authority body for regulating property use, with acceptable areas for short-stay accommodation listed under the city plan as including high density residential areas, or principal, major and district centre zones.

According to their development approvals, both the Teneriffe and South Brisbane apartment buildings are currently approved for long-term residential use only, meaning owners must lodge a development application to the council in order for the apartments

to be approved for short-stay use. That application must also have consent from the building's body corporate.

A spokesman confirmed council had received complaints regarding short stays in both apartment buildings and had adopted an "educational approach" in the case of the Saratoga Woolstore Apartments.

When asked about complaints made about short stays in the Spice Apartments the council spokesman said: "As a development application and court appeal has been active over the site, Council has not been able to progress an investigation at this stage."

The Spice Apartment body corporate recently won a three-year legal battle against

the building managers after they were found subletting units as short stay without the permission of council.

The building managers attempted to sidestep body corporate consent by submitting a short-stay development application to council.

However, Judge William Everson ruled that body corporate consent was mandatory for the application to be considered and approved by council.

Ms Price said the outcome was a win for residents and legal precedence but council could have taken enforcement action sooner to stop the illegal short-term stays. Currently more than 700 short-stay properties are known to Brisbane City Council.

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