

Hospitality News

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## Occupancy Accommodation Index shows solid rise for occupancy rates nationally

Friday, 19 November 2010

### Index highlights

- Nationally, property managers reported an average occupancy rate of 41% during the Sept quarter (up from 31% in the June quarter 2010).
- Occupancy rates of 48% are expected for the coming October-December quarter.
- The Northern Territory and Western Australia reported strong growths in occupancy rates compared to last quarter, increasing by 45% and 78% respectively. Tasmania experienced the lowest occupancy levels, followed by South Australia.
- An average of 46% of property managers report an increase in bookings during the July-September quarter of this year compared to the same period of last year.

### Summary

The Occupancy Accommodation Index (OAI) is a quarterly survey of more than 1,000 holiday rental property managers across Australia, by leading, independent specialist in online accommodation services, Occupancy.com. The OAI aims to determine what level of occupancy different types of accommodation establishments receive and complement ABS data for larger size properties.

Respondents are comprised from the 'smaller' end of the market, of which holiday houses and units make up more than half of the accommodation types.

"Small businesses continue to deliver critical tourism services to local economies. We identified a need for detailed and regular accommodation data to enable the industry to grow sustainably within suitable government policies," explains Occupancy.com Joint CEO, Justin Butterworth.

### National OAI figures (July-September 2010)

The Occupancy Accommodation Index illustrates that the average rate of occupancy during the quarter to October 2010 was 41%. This encompasses the Northern Territory's 78% occupancy rate at the top of the spectrum, as well as the 29% occupancy rate in Tasmania at the bottom end.

	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	NT	TAS	ACT
Occupancy rates April – June	27%	35%	29%	33%	31%	54%	35%	35%
National Average	31%							
Occupancy rates July – Sept	39%	50%	39%	33%	56%	78%	29%	67%
National Average	41%							
Percent change	41%	43%	32%	-2%	78%	45%	-19%	89%
National Average	32%							

While property managers are generally optimistic about increased occupancy for the next quarter (the predicted national occupancy rate for October-December 2010 is 48%), approximately 10% of property managers expect the strong Australian dollar to negatively impact local tourism in the next quarter with interest rates being less of a concern.

Property Manager sentiment has remained positive and expectations for the future remain high from last quarter. Property managers are predicting similar occupancy rates for the next quarter (October-December 2010) as they are for same period next year (July-September 2011). At predictions of 48% and 46% respectively, they are expecting a notable improvement on the 41% occupancy for the July-September 2010 quarter.

Occupancy.com CEO, Justin Butterworth, comments: "Nationally, we expect the industry's occupancy rates to strengthen as we move into the warmer festive months, when many families take a break with their families."

### State OAI figures

#### New South Wales

- In NSW, the average occupancy rate was 39% for the July-September quarter, which is lower than the national average of 41%.
- However, property managers in NSW are optimistic about a better October-December quarter, predicting occupancy rates of 45% for the transition into summer and the festive season.
- They are also slightly more optimistic about the July-September quarter for 2011, estimating 42% occupancy for that period.
- When compared to the same period last year, 45% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 31% report a decrease in bookings and 24% report similar booking numbers to last year.
- The strongest regions in New South Wales were the South Coast, Far North Coast & Byron Bay and the North Coast.

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Justin Butterworth comments: "It is somewhat disappointing that NSW was below the national average given its large population. This suggests that NSW residents are either holidaying less, or travelling overseas or interstate, perhaps north to Queensland where the weather is warmer."

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#### Queensland

- In Queensland, the average occupancy rate was 50% for the July-September quarter, which is higher than the national average of 41%
- However, Queensland property managers are less optimistic about occupancy rates for the October-December quarter, predicting occupancy rates of 46%. This represents a 4% decrease from the previous quarter
- They expect a slightly better July-September quarter for 2011, estimating 52% occupancy for that period
- When compared to the same quarter last year, 40% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 38% report a decrease in bookings and 22% report similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest regions in Queensland were the Sunshine Coast & Hinterlands, Gold Coast & Hinterlands and Far North Queensland

Justin Butterworth comments: "Queensland is always a great performer during late winter and early spring, when people are eager to escape the chill of the other states. Also noteworthy is the fact that property managers feel just as optimistic for the same period next year."

#### Victoria

- In Victoria, the average occupancy rate was 39% for the July-September quarter, which is on par with the NSW rate for the same period and similarly just below the national average of 41%
- Victorian property managers are fairly optimistic about occupancy rates increasing for the October-December quarter, predicting occupancy rates of 50%
- They are also cautiously optimistic for the July-September quarter in 2011, estimating 43% occupancy for that period
- When compared to the same time last year, 53% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 22% report a decrease in bookings and 25% report similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest regions in Victoria were the Bays & Peninsulas, Great Ocean Road and Inner Melbourne

Justin Butterworth comments: "As one of Australia's coolest states, Victoria performed under the national average but expects a stronger quarter as summer approaches. Occupancy is typically higher during the warmer summer months when visitors can soak up and enjoy its vast coastlines."

#### South Australia

- In South Australia, the average occupancy rate was 33% for the July-September quarter and thus came in beneath the 41% national average
- However, South Australian property managers remain optimistic about occupancy rates increasing for the October-December quarter, predicting 44% occupancy
- They demonstrate similar buoyancy for the July-September quarter for 2011, estimating 39% occupancy for that period
- When compared to the same period last year, 58% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 24% report a decrease in bookings and 18% report similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest regions in South Australia were the Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and Yorke Peninsula

Justin Butterworth comments: "South Australia typically performs better during warmer periods, when its popular coasts can take centre-stage amid the incredible warmth that it is so well known for. Unsurprisingly South Australia was significantly outperformed by neighbouring Western Australia and the Northern Territory."

#### Western Australia

- Western Australia's average occupancy rate was 58% over the July-September quarter, significantly higher than the national average of 41%
- Property managers are optimistic about similar success for the following October-December quarter, predicting occupancy rates of 57%
- They are even more confident for the July-September quarter in 2011, estimating 69% occupancy for that time
- When compared to the same period last year, 37% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 33% report a decrease in bookings and 30% report similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest regions in Western Australia were the Margaret River & South West, South Perth and North Perth

Justin Butterworth comments: "The Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has published positive results about the economic growth of the state, and it is clear that the tourism industry is both drawing from and contributing to this success. With growth in business, jobs and exports booming, there is little wonder that more people are flocking to the west coast."

#### Northern Territory

- The Northern Territory was the nation's best performer, achieving an average occupancy rate of 78% for the July-September quarter, smashing the national average of 41%
- Property managers in the Northern Territory are similarly confident about occupancy rates during the October-December quarter, predicting 75% occupancy
- They optimistically predict even better occupancy for the July-September quarter for 2011, estimating 85% occupancy for that time
- When compared to the same period last year, 33% of property managers reported an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 34% reported a decrease in bookings and 33% reported similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest region in the Northern Territory was Top End & Darwin

Justin Butterworth comments: "The Northern Territory is booming as a quintessentially Aussie holiday destination. It encompasses the warmth, adventure and culture that are sought by so many holiday-makers."

#### Tasmania

- Tasmania demonstrated the lowest occupancy rates in Australia, where the average occupancy rate was just 29% for the July-September quarter. This is significantly lower than the national average of 41%
- However, Tasmanian property managers remain quietly optimistic about occupancy rates increasing for the October-December quarter, predicting 53% occupancy
- They also predict higher occupancy for the July-September quarter for 2011, estimating 46% occupancy for that period
- When compared to the same period last year, 32% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings, 50% report a decrease in bookings and 18% report similar booking numbers to last year
- The strongest regions in Tasmania were Hobart & Tasman Peninsula, Huon Valley (D'Entrecasteaux)

and North Tasmania

Justin Butterworth comments: "Tasmania's geographical isolation makes it a more expensive holiday option for many which may explain in part why occupancy has fallen. However, there have been calls for the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania to be more proactive with its domestic marketing strategy in order to drive up occupancy figures in the island state."

#### ACT

- [The ACT's average occupancy rate was 67% during the July-September quarter](#), significantly higher than the national average of 41%
- [ACT property managers are very optimistic about occupancy rates increasing](#) for the October-December quarter, predicting 79% occupancy
- [They also predict higher occupancy levels for the July-September quarter for 2011](#), estimating 77% occupancy for that period
- When compared to the same period last year, 67% of property managers report an increase in the number of confirmed bookings and 33% report similar booking numbers to last year

Justin Butterworth comments: "As well as families, the number of business travellers to Canberra has increased substantially and we are seeing this translated in increased occupancy rates. Canberra is progressively seen as a place to host conferences and other business events which bodes well for the growth of the local tourism economy."

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