



# Guesthouse rejecting same-sex couples

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A guesthouse on the NSW south coast is refusing to accept bookings from same-sex couples, a *Sydney Star Observer* investigation has found.

On holiday accommodation website TakeABreak.com.au, The Coach House at Tomerong advertised itself as an "adult retreat" perfect for a "romantic getaway".

"Wine and dine in front of your own traditional wood fire or experience the benefits of our onsite sauna for two," read the listing. "Our comfortable bedding and sun soaked living areas prove to be a relaxing environment to snuggle away in."

But the listing also stated the guesthouse was "not gay friendly".

*Sydney Star Observer* called The Coach House and spoke to a woman who confirmed she would not accept bookings from same-sex couples. She hung up after claiming it was the gay community, not her, who was discriminatory.

Kellie McDonald, a solicitor with the Hawkesbury Nepean Community Legal Centre, confirmed it is illegal for a business to discriminate in this way.

"It's unlawful under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 for a person to refuse an individual accommodation on the basis of their homosexuality," McDonald said. "Anyone who is found to have breached the Act in this way may be ordered by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to pay a complainant up to \$100,000"

It is also against the law for businesses to

have rules that disadvantage gays and lesbians more than heterosexuals other than where it is deemed reasonable.

Rod Stringer, managing director of Gay And Lesbian Tourism Australia (GALTA), said he was shocked given being gay friendly was widely seen as a commercial advantage in the Australian tourism industry.

"GALTA represents hundreds of members throughout Australia including state and regional tourism authorities," Stringer said. "We have worked for nearly 20 years to educate the tourism and accommodation industry on all aspects of non-discrimination."

*Sydney Star Observer* brought The Guest House's listing to the attention of Justin Butterworth, joint CEO of TakeABreak's parent company, occupancy.com. Butterworth explained that advertisers on TakeABreak wrote their own listings, but that advertising a property as "not gay friendly" was in breach of their rules.

"TakeABreak does not tolerate discriminatory practices and all properties are required to operate in compliance with local, state and commonwealth legislation as part of listing terms and conditions.

"TakeABreak prides itself on offering a diverse inclusive service for all travellers and we have over 3600 properties Australia-wide that actively promote themselves as 'gay friendly'."

TakeABreak has now permanently removed The Coach House's listing.