

MEDIA STATEMENT

11 March 2008

The owners of the Haven backpacker hostel in Alice Springs this afternoon completed a detailed investigation of events leading up to a group of guests leaving the hostel last Saturday night.

Joint owner Greg Zammit said hostel management did not ask guests travelling as part of a Royal Life Saving Society of Australia group, some of whom were Aborigines to leave their accommodation. The group was, in fact, encouraged to stay.

“As owners, we are disappointed and sorry for the upset and embarrassment this situation has caused the young Aborigines and their companions,” Mr Zammit said.

The hostel manager had earlier tried to deal with complaints from international tourists about Aboriginal guests staying at the hostel.

Today’s investigation reveals:

- The hostel manager received a complaint from international backpackers about Aborigines who had checked into the hostel as part of a Royal Life Saving Society of Australia group.
- The manager was unable to allay the backpackers’ concerns and offered to move the backpackers to other accommodation. The lifesaving group was not asked to move.
- The manager was told that other backpackers were also complaining.
- The manager advised both parties of their respective views, that she was prepared to move the complainants and assured the lifesaving group that they were welcome to stay.
- An organiser with the lifesaving group told the manager that they felt uncomfortable and they wanted to leave.
- The manager offered to seek alternative accommodation once the lifesaving group decided to leave and did so in consultation with them.
- An organiser with the lifesaving group then asked for a night’s accommodation payment (\$480) for the whole group, which was provided by the manager. Subsequently, another organiser decided not to take the money and returned it to the manager

Mr Zammit said that his firm did not tolerate racial discrimination in any form and, in fact, promoted cultural experiences to its guests.

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