

## Local SMEs lead online

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When it comes to making online reservations for business and personal travel, Western Australian small to medium enterprises appear to be leading the world.

According to data released by hotels, resorts, motels and holiday apartment reservations firm, **HolidayCity**, Australian business made the most room bookings of any country in 2005, ahead of both the US and the UK.

Western Australia accounted for the highest percentage of room nights booked by SMEs in the country with 33 per cent of the 5,200 room nights booked by SMEs Australia-wide.

Australian SMEs made up about 21 per cent of the 26,000 total room nights booked with HolidayCity in the Australian market for 2005.

**HolidayCity** chief executive Lee Huat told WA Business News the high number of WA SMEs booking travel and personal holidays was due to broadband penetration in WA business.

"SME's are going to the internet to make flight bookings, so it's a natural progression to book accommodation online as well," he said. "SMEs are getting comfortable booking online."

Mr Huat said a major factor behind the trend was the corporate savings to be gained from online travel comparisons, which included no booking fees and the ability to book in advance with payment made on arrival.

"Western Australia is an important market for us and has a large potential," he said.

Another key reason for the large number of SMEs booking accommodation online, according to Mr Huat, was that 40 per cent of those working with WA SMEs were born overseas, which is considerably more than anywhere else in Australia, indicating a greater propensity to travel.

SMEs in New South Wales accounted for 29 per cent, while Victoria, Queensland and South Australia accounted for 24 per cent, 10 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.