



# Further complaint over hostel racism

By **JANE HOLROYD**  
and **SARAH SMILES**

A FORMER employee at an Alice Springs hostel at the centre of a racism row said staff were told not to accommodate Aborigines.

Adventure Tours Australia yesterday defended a manager at its Haven Backpackers Hostel, accused of refusing rooms to a group of Aboriginal women last weekend.

Sixteen women and children from the Yuendumu community were allegedly asked to leave Haven by manager Michelle Ball because other guests were complaining. The group had travelled 300 kilometres to Alice Springs for water-safety classes.

ATA's Greg Zammit issued a statement saying an internal investigation found the group decided to leave of its own accord and was not pressured.

But later yesterday Mr Zammit said the company would launch a new investigation after a former receptionist told *The Age* that Ms Ball instructed her to never allow Aboriginal guests to

## KEY POINTS

- Receptionist says she quit after Aboriginal man denied a room.
- Yuendumu women plan to file a complaint with the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.
- Hospitality group will look at new allegations.

stay at the Haven hostel. "We were told that we don't let Aboriginal people stay here," said Sarah, 22, who worked at Haven from July until October last year.

Sarah provided *The Age* with documents showing she was employed by Mr Zammit's company, but did not want her full name printed.

"Aboriginal people would come in and ask for a room and we'd have rooms available and Michelle would just say we didn't and send them on their way, or we would forward them on to (another hotel) in town," Sarah said.

Despite the warning, Sarah said she took a deposit for a

room from an Aboriginal man travelling from Adelaide last October. She claimed Ms Ball later gave the man his money back and asked him to leave in front of other guests.

"She (Ms Ball) was furious at me. She hissed. Her teeth were clenched," Sarah said.

"In front of everybody she said, 'No locals. No Aborigines. You know. What's wrong with you?'"

Ms Ball declined to comment yesterday.

Sarah, an Alice Springs local whose partner is part-Aboriginal, said she left Haven about two weeks after the incident. "I hated working for them after that," she said.

The Yuendumu women, who said Mr Zammit had lied in defence of his hostel, planned to complain to the NT Anti-Discrimination Commissioner.

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- Listen to an interview with a former employee of the hostel