



## Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation

# How to run a successful liquor forum

Liquor forums have been running in Victoria for well over 20 years. During that time, we have seen what elements make some forums more successful than others.

Chairpersons play an important role in running meetings and ensuring that the forum continues to be active, with as many members as possible.

In consultation with other forums, the VCGLR has developed this list of questions to consider when planning meetings. They are designed to help the chairperson hold successful liquor forums.

## Meetings

### *How often and how long should meetings be?*

Most liquor forums meet three to four times a year for an hour. Experience has shown if meetings go for too long or are held too frequently, attendance can drop off.

Discuss with your members how often they would like to meet and agree how long meetings should be. Setting meeting dates in advance can also help you and licensees plan ahead.

### *When and where should meetings be held?*

Consider the location and time of day of your meetings – will it suit everyone?

Some liquor forums rotate the location and let each forum member have a turn at chairing the meeting. Other forums hold them at the police station or local council – do what suits your members.

The most common times for meetings are 10am, 2pm or 3pm. Meetings held during busy meal service times don't usually suit.

Some forums include local sporting clubs and opt to have an occasional meeting in the evening to allow for volunteers to attend. Ultimately, the timing is up to your members.

Also, when setting up the room for meetings remember that round table format is less formal and allows for more discussion.

### *What are some suggestions to keep meetings interesting?*

#### 1. Guest speakers

Keeping interest in your forum can be a challenge and having guest speakers can assist with this. Ask your members what topics they would like to know more about – you don't need to have guest speakers at every meeting but they do help keep interest at meetings.

A list of suggested guest speakers for liquor forums can be found on the VCGLR website.

#### 2. Case studies

Ask licensees to discuss a recent incident at their venue and how they handled it. Discuss a recent incident reported in the local paper or observed by police. Ask a more experienced licensee to talk about how they manage their venue.

#### 3. Training opportunities

Providing training opportunities is another way to keep your members interested.

Possible training options:

- First Aid
- Responsible Service of Alcohol
- Handling difficult customers

## Administration

### *Are contact details of all attendees current?*

Email is a quick and easy way to communicate with people but it is important to ensure all contact details (including phone numbers and postal addresses) are kept up-to-date.

Email is a great channel to use to send out reminders at least one week prior to meetings.

### *Is it essential to have an agenda and take minutes?*

Agendas assist members to know what is going to be discussed at meetings and promotes guest speakers. It also helps keep the timing of the meeting on track.

Minutes are useful to record actions, and to give an overview of what was discussed to any members unable to attend. Minutes don't have to be extensive, they just need to capture the main points of discussion and any action items. Templates for minutes and agendas are available on the VCGLR website.

### *Is a dedicated email address for liquor forum correspondence necessary?*

If there is only one contact person for the liquor forum and they use their personal email address for correspondence, it can be difficult if that person is on leave or ill as no one else can access the inbox.

Having a generic email address which others can access, allows the administration of the forum to continue eg. blackhill\_liquor\_forum@police.vic.gov.au.

## Membership

### *Do all local licensed premises know about the liquor forum?*

The more venues signed up as members the better. It can be helpful to do a walk around to licensed venues and promote the forum face-to-face. The VCGLR can provide a list of current licensed premises and also have promotional flyers available to hand out. You can request these by emailing [contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au)

If you have limited your forum to certain licence types, consider opening it up to all licensed venues including wineries, sporting clubs, packaged liquor and licensed cafes and restaurants.

You can also promote the liquor forum in the local newspaper as they usually welcome articles about the local community.

### *Do other stakeholders need to be invited?*

Local council are important to have on board. Council planning departments play a role in liquor licensing and can provide updates for licensees. Council representatives often act as chairpersons too.

Depending on the dynamics of your forum you may like to consider inviting local security companies, health services and taxi companies if applicable.

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keep our community safe

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