



Safe function guidelines

The Safe function guidelines have been developed by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) as a resource for licensees (including licensed boats) to consider, when holding functions such as weddings, birthdays, award nights, debutante balls or conferences.

Licensees have legal obligations under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* and the conditions listed on their liquor licence. As a licensee, it is your responsibility to manage the responsible service of alcohol and comply with the law.

In addition to your legal obligations, these guidelines include a list of best practice measures designed to minimise harm and reduce risk to guests, staff and the public. These are not mandatory.

The VCGLR encourages licensees to develop a house policy to outline how functions will be delivered and what measures are in place to manage alcohol responsibly. We also encourage licensees to discuss your house policy and provide a copy to your client who is making the booking. Functions differ in nature, duration and size and therefore licensees may adopt a combination of the measures in their house policy.

If you have a person/team responsible for developing and selling function packages, it is vital that they also understand the law, adhere to your house policy and your expectations when they are selling your packages.

Legal requirements – know the law

Licensees must ensure:

- all conditions, including trading hours, listed on the liquor licence are adhered to.
- all required signage and the liquor licence are prominently displayed.
- all staff involved in the sale and supply of alcohol are trained in the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) - this applies to general, on premises, packaged liquor and late night licences.
- they maintain a copy of the most up-to-date RSA certificate or evidence of an approved RSA program completion issued to any staff member involved in the sale and service of liquor and have them available for inspection. This applies to general, on-premises, packaged liquor, and late night licences.
- free drinking water is available at all times (unless an exemption has been granted).
- alcohol is not served to minors and if a person appears to be under 18, check for acceptable forms of identification before supplying alcohol.
- alcohol is not served to intoxicated persons.
- alcohol is supplied and consumed within the red line area.
- drunk and disorderly persons are not permitted on the premises and are asked to leave.
- minors are accompanied by a parent/responsible person at all times.
- the maximum number of patrons, as listed on the liquor licence, is adhered to.

Best practice measures

The VCGLR encourages licensees to consider the best practice measures below to develop a house policy for functions, in addition to the legal requirements. Use these as a guide to formulate your house policy and also discuss with your clients the measures you will adopt to make sure their function is safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Responsible management of alcohol

- All unattended drinks will be collected and empty glasses cleared regularly.
- Staff will ask guests prior to re-filling their glass with alcohol.
- No shots will be served at any time or no shots after a specific time e.g. 10pm.
- No sculling competitions.
- The number of drinks per guest may be limited (e.g. one drink per guest) after a certain time.
- Appropriate glassware will be used depending on the function e.g. short or tall glasses or shatter proof.
- Alcohol:
 - will only be served in standard drink sizes
 - will not be served unless non-alcoholic and low alcoholic beverages are also available
 - will only be served and consumed in the designated function area
 - is not permitted on the dance floor and/or in the toilets.
- We do not permit:
 - BYO alcohol
 - alcohol to be taken from one part of the venue to another
 - bottles of spirits on the table (unless waiter service is available)
 - take away drinks.
- A no 'pass out' policy will apply, depending on the nature of the function.

Staff

- All staff are easily identifiable by their name tags and uniform.
- Staff monitor all areas of the dedicated function space regularly.
- Staff will not consume alcohol during the function.
- All staff are RSA trained.
- An appropriate number of staff are allocated to the function to allow them to regularly monitor activity at tables.
- Ongoing staff training will be provided in areas such as assertiveness skills, handling irate customers and role plays in dealing with intoxicated patrons.

Minors

- Identifying and managing minors is a licensee's legal responsibility.
- To assist with the identification of minors consider using wrist bands, seating them at one table or obtaining a list of minors at the function.
- If minors are found consuming alcohol the parents/responsible person will be contacted to manage the situation.
- Any alcohol discovered at a dry function, such as a school formal, will be confiscated and parents called.

Security

Consider the need for (extra) security at the function, the cost of which may be included in the function package. Factors such as the type of function, duration, number of guests, age group and if spirits are included may lead to increased risk and therefore require security.

You may need to employ more security than what is specified on your liquor licence (check your liquor licence).

- Develop a list of services provided by security to give to clients. This will help clarify the value provided by security in so much as they:
 - act as guest liaison officers
 - manage crowds
 - manage gate crashers
 - keep guests safe
 - provide a visible deterrent
 - provide peace of mind
 - support your staff and guests in emergency situations.
- Brief security regarding their role and your expectations at the function.
- Place a table near the exit, so that security can hold and monitor guest drinks if they go outside or to the toilet to avoid guests taking the drinks with them.
- Make security easily identifiable by wearing arm bands, high visibility vests and uniforms.
- Employ additional security (in addition to that specified on the liquor licence) if required.

Food

It is important that there is sufficient quantity of food provided to assist with responsible drinking and managing rapid intoxication.

Food should be available during the entire time or at regular intervals when alcohol is being served.

Documentation and administration

- Display the house policy at the entrance to the function and/or the bar.
- Record any incidents in an incident register.
- Display required signage in the toilets.
- Display signage explaining house rules, such as 'no drinks past this point' in the function area.
- Debrief with staff and security within a reasonable timeframe after the function and discuss areas for improvement and what worked well.
- Complete a function report, as part of the debrief and keep on file as this can assist if the client calls with a query or police need a statement.
- Provide function feedback to sales person/team and management if necessary.
- Check the incident register and follow up any outstanding items after the function.
- Keep a log of how much alcohol is served and sold at the function in case of any future query.

Other

Confirm a 'go to' person with the client prior to the function, who will support any requests and assistance required during the function in managing intoxicated patrons and any other issues.

Individuals found dealing or using illicit drugs will be removed from the premises and police called.

First aid assistance will be available.

Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks will be available to an identified 'designated driver'.

Provide:

- police with advance notice if it's a large function.
- transport information to guests and if required call a taxi.

If there are other licensed areas within the venue, other than the function location, notify the bar manager/s of the time the function will end so they may prepare for the arrival of customers and manage the situation.

If there is entertainment (band, DJ), discuss the function with them and advise of any noise restrictions, close neighbours and language or behaviour to avoid. Ask them to move to quieter music if the guests on the dance floor show signs of intoxication and get carried away with their dancing.

Check:

- the amenity of your venue regularly for any litter, damage, noise, potential public nuisance.
- CCTV footage after the function (if applicable).

If you have CCTV installed (for venues where the requirement for CCTV is not a condition of the licence), you may consider using CCTV for your functions and retaining the footage for 31 days afterwards.

VCGLR resources

- [Intoxication guidelines](#)
- [Minors factsheet](#), [minors audio file](#) and [minors quiz](#)
- [Required signage](#)
- [Venue handbook \(use as incident register\)](#)
- [Mandatory water factsheet](#) and [water poster](#)
- [Responsible advertising and promotions.](#)

Other resources

- [Standard drink sizes.](#)

Recommended key actions

1. Before the function

- Give your client a copy of your house policy or work with your client to develop a house policy specific to their function.
- Encourage your client to distribute a copy of your house policy to their guests so that they understand the rules in advance.
- Clarify all aspects of the function with your client and explain that you are required by law to manage the supply of alcohol responsibly.
- Conduct a short briefing with the nominated 'go to' person immediately prior to the function to discuss expectations.
- Brief staff and security on what your house policy is and expectations are for this event.

2. During the function

- Ensure that your legal obligations and house policy are followed.

3. After the function

- Debrief with your staff and security to identify areas of improvement in following your house policy for the next function. What worked? What didn't?

This publication avoids the use of legal language. Information about the law may have been summarised or expressed in general statements. This information should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional legal advice or reference to the actual legislation. Authorised by the Victorian Government.

Level 3, 12 Shelley Street, RICHMOND VIC 3121
1300 182 457 vcglr.vic.gov.au
contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au



Sample function house policy

The VCGLR has developed this sample Function House Policy as a resource for licensees. This can be adapted to your specific requirements. Feel free to add further best practice measures to assist in the delivery of a successful and safe function.

(Insert venue name) function house policy

We are committed to delivering a safe and successful function.

We have legal obligations relating to alcohol which we must abide by and conditions stipulated on our liquor licence. In addition, we will manage the function using the measures outlined below to reduce any risk and harm to guests, staff and the community.

Whilst it is our responsibility to manage the service of alcohol we require that you nominate a 'go to' person at the function (must be over 18), who we can call upon to assist with any issues which may arise during the function.

All our staff are trained in the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA).

The bar closes at (insert time) and alcohol will not be supplied after this time. All drinks must be consumed within 30 minutes after closing.

Alcohol:

- will only be served in standard drink sizes.
- will not be served unless non-alcoholic and low alcoholic beverages are available.
- will only be served and consumed in the designated function area.
- is not permitted on the dance floor and/or in the toilets.

We will:

- ask for acceptable forms of identification as proof of age.
- not serve alcohol to minors.
- not serve alcohol to intoxicated guests.
- stop serving alcohol if guests show signs of intoxication (before the situation gets out of hand).
- not serve alcohol to drunk or disorderly guests and, as required by law, they will be asked to leave the venue.
- ask each guest prior to re-filling their glass with alcohol.
- adhere to the trading hours listed on our liquor licence.
- collect unattended drinks and empty glasses regularly.

Minors must be accompanied by a parent/responsible person at all times.

If minors are found consuming alcohol the parents/responsible person will be contacted to manage the situation.

Food will be available during the entire time or at regular intervals when alcohol is being served.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in advance.