

Responsible serving of alcohol at functions

The aim of this document is to provide suggestions for the responsible service of alcohol at functions such as corporate events, weddings, cocktail parties or 21st birthdays.

The nature of each particular function will vary, and so will the particular methods to achieve responsible service of alcohol. The information presented here is designed to be a guide and to raise issues and generate ideas.

Every licensee should develop and disseminate amongst the staff a policy for the responsible service of alcohol (RSA) and in particular include a section on service of alcohol at functions. Attached to this document is a model policy which you can adapt to the particular needs of your establishment.

Include copies of your policy in your promotional material, on booking forms, brochures and websites.

All staff should undertake RSA training and be aware of the establishment's own RSA policy.

Licensed establishments should maintain an incident register for recording any occurrence that is relevant to the service of alcohol at the premises.

Booking the function

- At the outset, clearly communicate to the client that you are required to comply with the law regarding the service of alcohol.
- Provide the client with a copy of your policy at the time of booking.
- Whilst the final decision in respect to RSA issues will at all times be the responsibility of the venue, have the client nominate a person to be the "RSA nominee" for the function. The RSA nominee will be the person to whom the supervisor will direct any issues with the service of alcohol during the event.
The RSA nominee may be the organiser, or another suitable person, preferably not the guest of honour.
- Determine with the client how long the function will go for, and when liquor and food will be provided, particularly pre-dinner drinks when people may be drinking on an empty stomach.
It is suggested that pre-dinner drinks be limited to 30 minutes and ideally, the function run for no longer than 5 hours.
- Recommend appropriate quantities and style of food to match the time of day and the length of the function.
A 5.00pm to 7.00pm function can be very different from a 6.00pm to 10.00pm function. Food at cocktail functions is an important factor in controlling intoxication.
- Ask the client whether any minors will be in attendance at the function and how they will be identified.
You may require the client to provide a list of all minors. Coloured wrist bands can be an effective means of identifying minors and avoiding inadvertent illegal service of alcohol to minors.

Prior to the function

- Conduct a staff briefing immediately prior to the function to recap on the policy and any special requirements for the particular function.
- Identify the RSA nominee and ensure that staff are aware of his/her identity.
- Ensure staff are aware of the procedures for minors.
- Place copies of your policy in conspicuous places where they can be readily seen by attendees and/or easily accessed by the staff.
Short messages on table talkers or tent cards can be effective.
- Ensure that phone numbers for taxis are readily accessible by the attendees.

During the function

- Do not top up drinks when a patron is away from the table or preoccupied with conversation. Ask each patron prior to topping up his/her glass with alcohol.
This can be achieved by simply showing each patron the bottle prior to filling the glass.
- Always have water and soft drinks readily available.
*Water glasses and replenished jugs of water on the tables are helpful.
Drink trays at cocktail parties should always have water/soft drinks alternatives.
Offers of bottled water at strategic intervals during the function may also be effective.*
- Provide a safe means of transport to any patron whom staff consider should not drive.
*Offer to call a taxi.
If available, suggest use of the establishment's bus service.
Ascertain that someone else will be transporting the patron.*
- Ensure that any incidents are recorded in the incident register.

Post function

- Inspect the incident register and take any necessary follow up action.
- Conduct a short staff debrief in order to:
*Consider appropriate follow up actions arising from the incident register.
Discuss/assess application of the policy.
Identify improvements to your policy or its application for future functions.
Reinforce your policy with the staff.*

Model Policy

Responsible serving of alcohol

Thank you for considering our establishment for your function.

Our venue is committed to the responsible serving of alcohol because we:

- aim to provide a safe and friendly environment for our guests and staff
- want to abide by our legal obligations under the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998.

All our staff are trained in the Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA). We seek the co-operation of patrons to assist us in achieving our aim to provide the best possible experience for you and your guests.

Therefore, we adopt the following RSA practices for functions:

Whilst the final decision in respect to RSA issues will at all times be the responsibility of the venue, we require you to nominate a responsible person to assist our staff with any issues regarding liquor service at your function.

Minors will be required to be identified, and will not be served alcohol during the function.

Water and non-alcoholic beverages will be readily available at all times.

Guests will be asked before glasses are topped up with alcoholic drinks.

We reserve the right to limit the quantity of alcohol consumed by any particular guest.

We reserve the right to stop the supply of alcohol to the function guests, or any particular guest/s if it becomes apparent at any time (even prior to scheduled finish) that the guests are intoxicated.

We reserve the right to close down the function if the behaviour of the guests becomes unacceptable.

Guests who are intoxicated will not be served any alcohol and will be required to leave the premises.

All guests are encouraged to ensure they have safe transport from the function.

Staff will offer to call a taxi for any guest/s they consider should not be driving.

We respect our neighbours, and encourage our customers to leave the premises in a manner that does not disturb the amenity of the area.

We know that you will agree with the sentiments of this policy, and it is understood when you book your function. Your co-operation with the objectives set out above is a term of the contract between us. We will not be liable for any loss experienced by you or your guests by the implementation of any of the elements of this policy.

Again, we thank you for considering our establishment for your function.