

Responsible Liquor Advertising and Promotion Guidelines





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About these guidelines

Licensees have clear obligations under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (the Act) to serve alcohol responsibly and to ensure they promote or advertise their venue or products in a responsible manner. This is because the way alcohol is promoted and sold influences the way patrons consume alcohol and how they behave.

Certain types of liquor advertisements and promotions can encourage excessive and irresponsible alcohol consumption, which may contribute to harms such as anti-social behaviour, alcohol-related violence and disorder, and adverse health effects. Other types of advertisements and promotions may not be in the public interest or are out-of-step with community standards.

Given the harm that may be caused by inappropriate liquor advertising or promotional practices, the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission (the Commission) has powers under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (the Act) to ban advertisements or promotions

it considers likely to encourage or promote irresponsible liquor consumption, or that are otherwise not in the public interest.

These guidelines:

- explain how the Commission's banning powers are applied
- set out seven principles licensees should adhere to when advertising or promoting liquor or their venue
- provide examples and case studies to illustrate the types of advertisements or promotions likely to attract a banning notice by the Commission.

While it is not possible to provide examples of all the kinds of advertisements or promotions that may be banned under the Act, the principles and examples contained in these guidelines constitute a broad picture of what is or is not considered acceptable liquor advertising or promotion in the Commission's opinion.

Application to online and social media sites

Some licensees use social media or other online channels to advertise or promote their business. Licensees are responsible for advertisements published on social media sites (such as Instagram. Facebook, TikTok and Twitter) for their licensed premises generated by the licensee or within their reasonable control. This includes comments made by third parties concerning liquor advertisements or promotions on their social media or web pages, as well as advertisements or promotions conducted by third parties engaged by the licensee (such as social media influencers or brand ambassadors). Licensees must ensure any third parties they engage to promote or advertise their products or venue comply with the principles outlined in these guidelines.

Applicabilty to on-premises consumption and packaged-liquor supply

Advertisements and promotions can significantly influence the behaviour of people purchasing and consuming liquor in the context of both venues that provide on-premises consumption such as bars, clubs and restaurants, and venues that sell packaged liquor for consumption away from the premises, such as bottle shops and businesses supplying packaged liquor via online orders. The principles and examples of unacceptable practices set out in these guidelines apply to all types of licensees.

Licensees operating packaged-liquor outlets or online businesses supplying packaged liquor are encouraged to carefully consider point-of-sale marketing displayed at their premises or website to ensure advertisements and promotions do not encourage irresponsible alcohol consumption or are otherwise not in the public interest.

What does the law say?

Under section 115A of the Act, the Commission may give a notice to a licensee banning them from advertising or promoting:

- the supply of liquor; or
- the conduct of their licensed premises.

The Commission may do this if the advertisement or promotion is likely to encourage irresponsible alcohol consumption or is otherwise not in the public interest. The Act provides that advertisements or promotions that are not in the public interest include those that are:

- likely to appeal to minors
- likely to encourage or condone violence or antisocial behaviour
- directly or indirectly sexual, degrading or sexist
- prescribed under regulations as advertisements or promotions that are not in the public interest.

Advertisements or promotions can come in various forms, including:

- signs, banners, flyers and posters
- newspaper or internet advertisements
- websites
- social media channels, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or Twitter
- · SMS.



How will the law be applied?

Step one

If the Commission is alerted to a particular advertisement or promotion (for example, by receiving a complaint or a referral, or in the course of conducting an investigation or audit), it will apply the principles in these guidelines to assess whether the advertisement or promotion is likely to lead to irresponsible alcohol consumption or is otherwise not in the public interest.

Step two

The Commission may contact the licensee seeking the advertisement or promotion and the licensee may wish to withdraw or modify the advertisement or promotion at that juncture. In certain circumstances, the Commission may immediately issue a banning notice (for example, when the advertisement or promotion severely contradicts the principles in these guidelines).

Step three

The Commission will assess any response received from the licensee. Should the response not result in the situation being rectified (such as amendment or modification of the advertisement) or an acceptable explanation, the Commission may issue a formal section 115A banning notice. Licensees may apply to the Commission to have the decision of its delegate reviewed.

Step four

Failure by the licensee to comply with a banning notice may result in fines of up to 120 penalty units (this amounts to \$21,809 as at 1 June 2021).

Principles, examples and case studies of unacceptable practices

No Principle Rationale Examples of unacceptable **Case studies** practice Principles regarding irresponsible consumption of liquor The advertising This principle aims to Sculling or speed-drinking Previous advertisements games, boat races, "toss or promotion of prevent promotions that or promotions banned encourage people to drink the boss" and other by the Commission liquor must not in excess or faster than they challenges or "dares" to under this principle encourage the rapid or excessive normally would. It covers induce people to drink include: consumption of promotions such as games, rapidly or sample a • an advertisement liquor, nor should competitions or "dares" particular alcoholic drink published by a it use emotive that encourage excessive because of its higher licensee that used descriptions, alcohol consumption or alcohol content. the phrase "get language or offer alcohol as a prize. trashed every week Promoting binge-drinking and get snapped", imagery that is Emotive language or events such as "Mad likely to encourage descriptions such as as well as imagery Monday", or end-ofirresponsible "drink till you drop" of people showing school-year celebrations, drinking. may encourage rapid signs of intoxication such as "Schoolies Week", or general anti-social or excessive alcohol or "after parties". consumption. behaviour In the context of packaged · Using language, slogans, a promotion that liquor, advertisements or images, labelling, or titling a encouraged patrons promotions that place promotion so it encourages to "get hammered" emphasis on the alcohol rapid or excessive alcohol and to pretend to content of a product also consumption (for example, be sober if anyone have the potential to lead to "beat the clock", "drink asked excessive or irresponsible like a fish", "beer prices liquor consumption. an advertisement on hammered", "we drink till we drop", "drink till you get a licensee's social smashed"). media channel that asked customers Advertisements or what flavour of a promotions encouraging packaged-liquor the consumption of a product made product by emphasising them "lose all their its alcoholic strength dignity" and asked (unless emphasis is placed them to raise their on the product's lowhand if they had alcohol content relative been "personally to the typical strength victimized by that of similar beverages) or product". the intoxicating effect of alcohol (such as promotions highlighting the number of standard drinks in a product compared to the price of the product).

No **Rationale Examples of unacceptable** Case studies **Principle** practice 2. The advertising Extreme discounts on alcohol. • Promoting "all you can drink" Previous within a limited timeframe, or promotion of such as 50% off the retail price, advertisements or liquor must not may lead to rapid or excessive or providing drink cards that promotions banned involve extreme alcohol consumption by must be redeemed within a by the Commission customers, particularly when short period of time. under this principle discounts that would encourage the discount is for a limited time include: Any competition where within a trading period (which a promotion of excessive unlimited free liquor is consumption, may also encourage stockpiling "TWO FOR ONE the prize, or part of the ALL DRINKS ALL encourage the of drinks by customers) and prize, and consumption is stockpiling of there are no controls in place to DAY" on Mother's expected to take place on drinks, or involve limit the amount consumed by Day the licensed premises. This free or unlimited patrons. a promotion includes free giveaways as liquor being of "unlimited part of a draw or something provided without For certain types of functions, similar, which involves free beer and reasonable liquor, food and entertainment unlimited free liquor (such champagne" for controls in place. is included in the entry price (for as winning free bottomless two consecutive example, race day functions, brunches). hours. fundraising events, balls or special events). In some cases, Advertisements highlighting the combination of the type the availability of free liquor of event and the unlimited without promoting other supply of alcohol as part of a services offered by the venticket or entry price can lead to excessive drinking over a Promotions linked to unperiod of time, especially if the predictable events (such as promotion primarily focuses on "free drinks after every goal the availability of free liquor and scored"). appropriate measures have not been put in place to limit the Promotions involving examount of alcohol consumed. treme discounts (such as \$1 shots of spirits). Promoting these functions Promoting packaged cask as "all-you-can-drink" wine at 50% off the recomor "bottomless" events mended retail price, without can encourage a culture any limits on the number of of irresponsible liquor casks that may be purchased consumption, especially where by a customer. no controls are in place to minimise this type of behaviour. Multiple promotions in one trading period (such Similarly, extreme discounts on as "open bar for the first 10 packaged liquor, particularly minutes of each hour" or packaged-liquor products that multiple recurring "happy are already inexpensive, may hours"). lead to irresponsible alcohol Promotions that encourage consumption, where reasonable or reward the purchase or controls are not in place to limit drinking of large quantities the amount of packaged liquor of liquor in a single session customers can purchase. or transaction (such as "buy six drinks in one round and get the seventh for free"). Discounted or free drink offers conducted in rapid succession (such as "twofor-one spirits for the first 15

minutes of every hour").

No	Principle	Rationale	Examples of unacceptable practice	Case studies
3.	The advertising or promotion of liquor must not feature non-standard serving techniques, non-standard sized drinks or the availability of liquor in receptacles that encourage rapid drinking.	There are well-recognised standard drinking receptacles used for drinking particular types of liquor. While variations exist in different Australian jurisdictions, in Victoria standard-size glasses are generally used for serving wine, beer and spirits, which are discussed in the approved Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training course. In some cases, new and innovative ways of serving liquor may encourage irresponsible drinking (for example, drinking receptacles such as test tubes encourage individuals to consume liquor quickly by sculling or downing the drink in one). A new serving method may also mean people are less aware of how much liquor they are consuming. When advertising or promoting the sale of liquor, licensees are encouraged to use standard drinking receptacles to minimise the risk of rapid or excessive drinking.	 Serving liquor in a yard glass for sculling Pouring liquor straight into patrons' mouths (such as pouring liquor directly from a bottle or shooting liquor from a water pistol). Supplying multiple shot of alcohol for one person's consumption. Serving spirits in a nonstandard spirits glass (such as in a schooner glass). Serving liquor in test tubes or receptacles that are not free standing and will thus likely be consumed rapidly. Supplying large quantities of mixed spirits or other liquor in jugs or other receptacles that are not intended to be shared (such as supplying champagne bottles with straws, or serving spirits, champagne or wine bottles without appropriate drinking glasses, or providing cocktails in buckets). Where the alcohol is intended to be shared, standard drinking receptacles should be provided with its purchase. 	Commission under this principle include: • promoting "Fishbowl Fridays" that offer cocktails served in fishbowls with straws.

Principle **Rationale Examples of unacceptable Case studies** practice **Public interest principles** Promotions providing Linking liquor promotion Previous advertisements The advertising explicitly or implicitly incentives for patrons to dress or promotion or promotions banned by of liquor must with messages about provocatively or remove their the Commission under not contain achieving sexual or social clothing (such as wet T-shirt this principle include: any directly or success may contribute competitions, "free drinks for • a promotion indirectly sexual, to a culture around women wearing bikinis", "take encouraging off an item of clothing for a degrading, alcohol use that places customers to sexist, offensive pressure on people to free drink" or "\$50 drink card expose themselves either drink more or for women who hang their in exchange for free or discriminatory undies behind the bar"). content, such to rely on liquor as a alcohol during a "social lubricant" and a drinking competition as sexual, Using images that objectify degrading, sexist way of achieving social women's and men's bodies, a video advertisement or offensive acceptance. portraying men or women as on a licensee's website images, sex objects or using sexual depicting dialogue symbols, figures Using sexual imagery using the term "slut" innuendo or sexual images, or innuendo in liquor promotions or such as images depicting and animated female advertisements can foster which imply nudity. patrons being handed sexual or social message about sexual containers of vomit availability being linked Connecting liquor success. after asking for drink with liquor consumption. consumption with achieving specials social or sexual success (such Advertisements or as "drink x brand and be the • an advertisement promotions that are envy of all your friends"). depicting female insulting, offensive, or genitalia giving birth to Discriminatory promotions discriminatory are also a licensee's business based on gender or race, etc., not in the public interest. logo. (such as free drinks for women only) When considering whether an Using language or images advertisement is that are likely to insult or offensive or not, the offend a reasonable person, Commission will consider or language or images that what an ordinary are discriminatory, vilifying reasonable person within or demeaning. This includes the general community language or images that mock, would consider offensive. ridicule or deride certain The use of humour is not personal characteristics, such an excuse for offensive as disability. advertisements or Advertisements or promotions promotions. that use stereotypes to highlight racial differences.

Examples of unacceptable Principle Rationale Case studies practice • Using images or messages 5. The advertising The link between alcohol A previous advertisement or promotion misuse and violence and associating liquor or promotion banned by of liquor must anti-social behaviour is consumption with risky or the Commission under not encourage well established. dangerous activities (such this principle include: as sky diving, motor racing, a meme posted by or suggest any association with Reducing the impact of drink driving or speed a licensee on social risk taking, or alcohol-fuelled violence boating). media featuring an with violent, and anti-social behaviour image of a man driving Using stereotypes that link on public safety is an a car, accompanied aggressive, the advertising or promotion dangerous important community with the text "Clean of liquor with celebrating or anti-social goal, and there is clearly a and sober, just means aggressive or risk-taking behaviour. public interest in breaking that I'm showered and behaviour. the link between alcohol heading to the liquor and aggressive behaviour. store". Associating liquor with activities that encourage For the purpose of this or condone aggressive guideline, anti-social behaviour towards others behaviour covers a range (such as competitions or of conduct including challenges that pit patrons acting in a manner that against each other, for causes or is likely to cause example, arm wrestling). harassment, alarm or distress to other people, such as intimidating, bullying, aggressive or threatening behaviour. It also includes socially unacceptable behaviour (such as vandalism, rowdy or noisy behaviour, creating a public nuisance) or offensive behaviour (such as urinating in public). 6. The advertising In addition to beingillegal, • Using images, text or A previous advertisement or promotion taking illicit drugs can language that allude to or promotion banned by of liquor must have serious health taking drugs. the Commission under this principle include: not suggest any consequences and poses Using props, settings or association with, risks, particularly when • a video promotion scenarios that link the acceptance combined with alcohol. posted on a social promotion of liquor to illicit of, or allusion There is a strong public media site that drugs. included comments to, illicit drugs, interest in upholding the law. nor encourage Linking liquor consumption by the licensee breaking of the law. Licensees should ensure encouraging patrons to drink driving. they are not advertising or to "snort" salt from Linking liquor consumption promoting liquor in a way the chest of patrons to breaking the law or that could be seen to be before drinking a depicting people intending encouraging or condoning tequila shot. to break, or actually breaking, breaking the law. the law. Showing contempt for the law.

Examples of unacceptable Case studies No **Principle Rationale** practice 7. The advertising It is illegal under the Act • Using characters, imagery Previous advertisements or promotion to sell or supply liquor to (such as cartoons), designs, or promotions banned by of liquor must minors. Young adults are motifs, interactive games, the Commission under not encourage at high risk of alcoholmerchandise or media likely to this principle include: under-age related injury, including appeal to minors. the promotion of road trauma, violence drinking or a product with Using role models, celebrities otherwise be and sexual coercion. packaging similar to a or other testimonials that likely to appeal to There is a clear public well-known chocolate primarily appeal to minors. interest in preventing the beverage brand minors. harms associated with Using names or packaging consumed by minors drinking by minors. that could be confused with a post by a licensee Licensees should confectionary or a nonon a social media exercise particular care alcoholic drink or otherwise site featuring an to minimise children's appeal to minors. image of a toddler, exposure to liquor accompanied with Using settings primarily used advertisements and the text "When the by minors (such as schools promotions. or playgrounds), including vodka kicks in and In addition to this your confidence depicting models in settings principle, the Act also skyrockets" primarily used by minors even prohibits placing static where the model used in the alcohol advertisements advertisement or promotion is within 150 metres of the over 18 years of age. perimeter of a school. Further information Depicting models in school on this prohibition is uniform or other clothing available on the VGCCC typically worn by minors, or website: https://www. models who are or look under vcglr.vic.gov.au/alcohol-18 years of age. advertising-near-schools. Using props or characters commonly associated with minors or their interests or activities (such as cartoon characters or TV characters targeted at minors). Showing liquor consumption and minors in the same frame. Advertising or promoting liquor in connection with nonrelated products or services typically purchased or used by minors.

Assessing risks in relation to promotions that may encourage or condone irreponsible liquor consumption

Promotions at venues where customers consume on the premises

There are a number of elements in a promotion that can result in the irresponsible consumption of liquor. When considering new liquor promotions for licensed venues, licensees should carefully work through each element to assess the risks posed by the promotion. These elements interact and, in many cases, the risk that is raised by one element can be reduced or offset by adjusting another element of the promotion.



Timing

Conducting promotions during certain time periods may pose higher risks of irresponsibility

Type and strength of liquor

The stronger the liquor offered during a promotion, the higher the risk of intoxication

Price

The cheaper the liquor, the increased incentive for patrons todrink excessively

Promotion

Duration of the promotion

The longer the promotion runs, the higher the risk of intoxication

Type of promotional activity

Some types of promotions encourage irresponsible drinking

Frequency

Conducting a promotion several times during a night can increase the risk of irresponsible drinking

Unacceptable promotions

This is an example of a promotion that includes all the wrong elements:

- reduced-price liquor is offered
- the promotion is offered multiple times over the course of the trading period
- the duration of the promotion is three hours
- the strength of the liquor increases over the course of the promotion
- the promotion is conducted at a time when there is an increased risk of intoxication, particularly as the strength of the available drinks increases.

Licensees seeking to reduce the risk associated with liquor promotions should take the following factors into consideration:

- Type and strength of liquor: the higher the percentage of alcohol by volume used in the promotion, the higher the risk that patrons will become intoxicated. Consider running promotions offering lower-strength liquor products.
- 2. Price: the cheaper the liquor, the greater the incentive for patrons to purchase and consume excessive amounts of it. Particular care should be taken with promotions involving free liquor, especially for high-strength liquor products. Consider limiting liquor discounts during a promotion, ensuring any price reduction is not excessive.
- 3. Duration: the longer a promotion runs, the higher the risk of irresponsible alcohol consumption. By placing reasonable limits on the duration of their promotion, licensees can still provide opportunities to increase sales with reduced risk of irresponsible alcohol consumption (for example, a "happy hour" should not be "five hours of happiness").

- 4. Frequency: a promotion conducted several times during a trading period can heighten the risk of irresponsible alcohol consumption (for example, "half-priced drinks for the first 10 minutes of each hour"). Consider limiting the number of promotions held during a single trading period.
- 5. Timing or timeframe: conducting promotions at certain times may pose higher risk of irresponsible alcohol consumption. Promotions conducted before 10pm raise fewer risks as patrons are less likely to have consumed excessive amounts of liquor already and are more likely to have eaten a meal that reduces the effect of liquor. After this time, the risk of patrons becoming intoxicated increases. Licensees are encouraged not to conduct promotions at high-risk times.
- 6. Type of activity: the nature of the promotion itself may contribute to a culture of excessive or irresponsible drinking. For example, competitions, games, "dares" or challenges can create incentives for patrons to drink more. Licensees should carefully consider the type of promotion they are conducting.

Responsible promotions relating to onpremises consumption

Licensees can make a range of good decisions about promotions they conduct in licensed venues to reduce the risk of irresponsible alcohol consumption.

These include:

- restricting the duration, timing and frequency of "happy hours" and free or discounted drinks promotions
- ensuring controlled distribution of "drink cards" and allowing their redemption beyond a single trading period (for example, redeeming a "drink card" over a one-month period)
- adopting a serving policy that restricts the number of drinks customers can obtain during a promotional period
- offering non-liquor prizes or rewards for competitions (for example, meal vouchers or free entry or movie tickets)
- conducting promotions involving low and nonalcoholic drinks
- pricing drinks to encourage customers to drink in moderation (for example, low and nonalcoholic drinks may be priced lower than fullstrength drinks)
- incorporating responsible drinking messages into advertisements and promotions
- ensuring promotions and advertisements clearly state they are intended for people aged 18 years and over
- referring any third-party promoters engaged to promote a venue to these guidelines and maintaining firm control and oversight of activities undertaken on the licensee's behalf.

Conducting responsible promotions should be supported by responsible alcohol serving strategies to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for customers. These strategies may include:

- helping customers make informed decisions about their alcohol consumption by standardising servings or raising awareness of the number of standard measures in the serving being consumed
- offering free tap water regularly and ensuring food is available
- establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure all staff understand and observe responsible serving practices
- designating staff (RSA marshals) to monitor and co-ordinate the responsible serving of alcohol in high-risk premises to help reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm
- ensuring adequate security is on hand at peak trading times and providing briefings to security and service staff emphasising the need to identify potential issues before they become problems
- having written house policies regarding a venue's strict adherence to RSA principles and communicating these to customers, including making customers aware of responsible drinking laws, and that inappropriate behaviour and intoxication will not be tolerated
- ensuring minors and intoxicated people are not served liquor
- displaying all required signage prominently
- operating venues within any prescribed patron capacity
- promoting safe transport options.



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Responsible promotions relating to packaged-liquor supply

Licensees can make a range of good decisions about the way they promote packaged liquor to reduce the risk of irresponsible consumption.

These include:

- placing limits on the quantity of discounted packaged liquor that can be purchased by a single customer at any given time
- conducting promotions involving low-alcoholic liquor or liquor that normally retails at higher prices
- ensuring any discounts on packaged liquor are reasonable and not extreme
- not placing emphasis on the strength of the liquor or its intoxicating effect
- incorporating responsible drinking messages into any advertisements or promotions.

Conducting responsible promotions should also be supported by responsible serving of alcohol strategies, particularly at packaged-liquor outlets.

These strategies include:

- establishing and implementing policies and procedures to ensure all staff understand and observe responsible serving practices
- observing customers and considering refusing service to customers who frequent your store to purchase packaged liquor several times a day
- maintaining a register of RSA-related incidents
- ensuring minors and intoxicated people are not supplied with liquor, including refusing service where secondary supply to minors is suspected.

Other resources and national guidelines

Licensees are encouraged to consider other resources available in relation to responsible liquor advertisements and promotions, such as the ABAC Responsible Alcohol Marketing Code (ABAC Code), which outlines key standards for responsible content and placement of alcohol marketing in Australia. Licensees may apply to have their marketing communications independently assessed by ABAC pre-vetters against the Code's standards. Further information on the ABAC Code and the pre-vetting procedure is available at www.abac.org.au.

National rules also apply to alcohol advertisements on television. Information on these rules may be accessed on the Australian Communications and Media Authority website at www.acma.gov.au.

Complaints

Complaints about inappropriate liquor advertising and promotions should be made to:

Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission

GPO BOX 1988

Melbourne VIC 3001

Telephone: 1300 182 457

Hours of operation: 8:30am – 5:00pm weekdays (except public holidays)

Email: contact@vgccc.vic.gov.au

