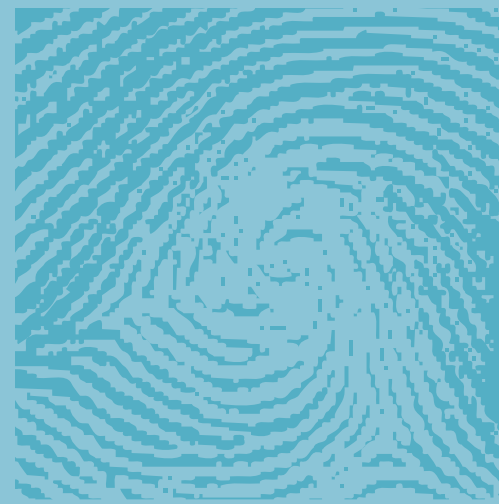


Voluntary guidelines to provide free or low-cost drinking water on licensed premises



Background

On 22 June 2003 the Victorian Government announced that Voluntary Guidelines to provide free or low-cost drinking water on licensed premises would be developed. This measure was considered necessary following recent concerns that the lack of available free or low cost water on some licensed premises has been impacting on the health and welfare of patrons in Victoria.

It is essential that drinking water is readily available in order to prevent dehydration, which is often associated with the consumption of alcohol and some illicit drugs. The drinking of water can also slow down alcohol consumption and minimise the potential for intoxication. While the Government does not in any way condone illicit drug use on licensed premises, all possible actions should be taken to minimise any health risks associated with licit or illicit drug use.

While many operators and owners of licensed premises are currently offering appropriate drinking water facilities, it is proposed that these Voluntary Guidelines will provide a standard framework for the provision of drinking water at all licensed premises.

The Guidelines have been developed by Government and industry stakeholders following a consultation process that included: the Department of Human Services, Liquor Licensing Victoria, the Victoria Police, and representatives from the industry including the Australian Hotels Association and the Nightclub Owners Association and Restaurant and Catering Victoria.

Guidelines for licensed premises owners and operators

It is the responsibility of operators and owners of licensed premises to make drinking water readily accessible to all patrons. It is therefore a requirement that operators and owners of licensed premises undertake the following:

- Free or reasonably priced drinking water will be available to patrons at all times on any premises where liquor is sold or supplied.
- Water should be sold or supplied at or near liquor service points, or by the same method that liquor is sold or supplied.
- When free drinking water is not feasible, a reasonable charge for drinking water will apply and must be less than the lowest price at which any alcoholic or non-alcoholic drink is sold on the premises.
- To comply with the Guidelines operators and owners of licensed premises can also choose from various options for providing drinking water including:
 - Water by the glass/carafe from the bar or by waiter service (to a dining table);
 - Bottled water; or
 - Using a water cooler.

For health and hygiene reasons, cold unadulterated water should be available in all bathrooms and toilets, however directing patrons to a venue's bathroom to obtain drinking water does not comply with these Guidelines.

These guidelines are agreed and endorsed by:

Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Health

Peter Iwaniuk
President
Nightclub Owners Association

Peter Burnett
State President
Australian Hotels Association

Dur-e Dura
President
Restaurant and Catering Victoria