

Providing Free Drinking Water at Licensed Premises

Why water service matters

In most Australian states and territories, licensed venues are required to provide **free drinking water** to patrons.

Water helps patrons:

- Stay hydrated
- Pace their alcohol consumption
- Reduce the risk of intoxication and harm

Providing water is part of responsible service and a safer venue environment.

How water is often provided

Some venues place:

- Open jugs of water on the bar, or
- Self-serve stations where patrons can pour their own

While convenient, these setups can create **safety risks** if not properly managed.

Potential risks with open water containers

Unsupervised water jugs or open containers can be tampered with. This may allow someone to:

- Add alcohol
- Add other substances
- Contaminate the water for harmful or criminal reasons

Some drugs used for drink spiking can be colourless and tasteless, making them hard to detect. For this reason, open water containers should be treated with the same awareness as unattended drinks.

Safer ways to provide free water

Venues can reduce risk by using safer water service methods, such as:

- Chilled water taps connected to plumbing
- Water bubblers or fountains
- Staff-served water rather than unattended jugs
- Regularly replacing and supervising any water containers that are used

These options help ensure water remains safe while still being freely available.

Your role as staff

As a staff member, you should:

- Be aware of where and how free water is provided in your venue
- Monitor water stations as part of your general floor awareness
- Remove and replace any water that looks suspicious or has been left unattended for a long time
- Report concerns about tampering or suspicious behaviour to a supervisor or manager immediately

Water is meant to support patron safety — staff awareness helps make sure it stays that way.

Key takeaway

Free water is a legal requirement in many areas and an important part of responsible service. However, how it is provided matters.

By using safer service methods and staying alert, staff help:

- ✓ Support patron wellbeing
- ✓ Reduce the risk of drink spiking or contamination
- ✓ Maintain a safe and responsible venue environment

When in doubt about water service or safety concerns, always involve a **manager or supervisor**.