

Medical Cannabis and Licensed Venues

Why this can be confusing

Some patrons may legally use **medically prescribed cannabis** (medical marijuana). This can raise questions for venue staff, especially around:

- Where it can be used
- Whether proof is required
- How it affects alcohol service

The key thing to remember is this:

Your responsibility is not to judge the prescription — it is to manage behaviour and intoxication in the venue.

Can medical cannabis be used at a licensed venue?

Medical cannabis is not the same as tobacco. This means venues are **not automatically required** to allow it in outdoor smoking areas (DOSA).

Each venue can set its own house rules about what is permitted on the premises. These rules should be covered in the venue's **Responsible Management of Licensed Venue (RMLV) planning and policies**, often through the RAMP (Risk Assessed Management Plan).

Staff should always follow **venue policy and manager direction**.

Do staff need to check prescriptions or medical proof?

Frontline staff are **not expected to assess medical documents**.

If a patron says they are using cannabis for medical reasons:

- Stay calm and professional
- Refer the matter to a **manager or licensee**
- Do not argue about whether it is “real” or “legal”

Your focus should remain on **behaviour and safety**, not the medical details.

The most important rule: intoxication and behaviour

Under liquor laws, a person must not be served alcohol if they are **unduly intoxicated** by:

- Alcohol
- Drugs (illegal or legal)
- Any other substance

It does not matter whether the substance is prescribed. What matters is **how the person is behaving**.

If a patron who has used medical cannabis shows signs such as:

- Slurred speech
- Poor coordination
- Aggressive, disruptive or inappropriate behaviour
- Being unable to care for themselves

Then normal RSA/RSG rules apply.

You must:

- **Refuse further alcohol service**, and
- Follow venue procedures, which may include asking them to leave if their behaviour is affecting others.

This is based on **safety and legal obligations**, not discrimination.

Is refusal of service discriminatory?

Refusing service is **not discrimination** if the reason is:

- Undue intoxication, or
- Behaviour that is unsafe, disruptive, or against venue rules

The refusal must be based on **observable behaviour**, not simply because the person says they use medical cannabis.

Always use calm, respectful language and follow your venue's refusal procedures.

What if cannabis use is not allowed in the venue?

If your venue does **not** permit cannabis use on the premises (including in smoking areas), a manager may:

- Ask the patron to leave the licensed area to use their medication elsewhere
- Ensure they do not take alcohol with them
- Allow them to return later, if appropriate and if their behaviour is acceptable

This should be handled by a **manager or licensee**, not junior staff alone.

Key takeaway for RSA/RSG staff

You are not there to decide if someone's medication is valid.

Your job is to:

- ✓ Follow venue policy
- ✓ Monitor patron behaviour
- ✓ Refuse alcohol to anyone unduly intoxicated
- ✓ Involve a manager when situations are unclear
- ✓ Keep the venue safe for everyone

When in doubt, **escalate early** to a supervisor or manager.