

What does HR recommend ensuring you have for a 'Very Merry Christmas Party'?

It is important for all employers to ensure that their requirements in relation to safe and appropriate behaviour at the Christmas functions are communicated to all employees at the earliest opportunity.

Work Health and Safety Duty

Employers must remember that they have a duty of care for their employees, even when the event occurs outside the workplace. If the employer has organised or endorsed a particular Christmas event then a duty of care will apply and they should be careful of all risks including injury, bullying or even sexual harassment. We have therefore prepared the following Checklist to assist Employers in meeting their Work Health and Safety obligations.

- Make sure all employees are informed of the appropriate standard of behaviour expected of them.
- Reiterating your discrimination and harassment policy to all employees in the weeks leading up to the Christmas function and have it noted (documented) at all staff meetings.
- Have a code of conduct and drug and alcohol policy in place and remind employees of these policies before the Christmas function.
- Set out clear, defined start and finish times for the function.
- Train Managers and Supervisors, so they know their obligations and responsibilities and can prepare them to deal with any issues that may arise.
- Consider dietary requirements and cater for appropriately for a multicultural team and making available vegetarian, vegan and celiac options.
- Choose a safe venue with access to public transport, consider providing cab vouchers and/or recommend nominated 'non-drinking' drivers.
- If the activity is outdoors, encourage workers to be sun smart and keep hydrated.
- Ensure shelter in the case of bad weather.
- Advise staff that the employer's responsibility ceases at the end of the function and if staff choose to continue, that they are responsible for their own safety and this must be communicated clearly to all employees.
- Ensure that underage employees are not served any alcoholic drinks.
- Serve alcohol responsibly. (RSA – Responsible Service of Alcohol)
- Provide plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks as well.
- If an employee is removed from the function for being too intoxicated, make sure you call them a cab and make sure they get into it and are capable of giving their address to the driver.
- Make sure you supervise staff to prevent excessive drinking and inappropriate behaviour.
- Ensure managers are acting responsibly and remind them to act in a professional capacity during the evening and to help supervise the event.
- Do not arrange or pay for drinks at alternative venues after the function has finished as this extends the employers liability. If there is a concern about the function, then hold a lunchtime party, and maybe include employee's families etc.

Want to know what your responsibilities (and liabilities) are, as an employer, for holding functions such as Christmas Parties? Contact one of our friendly Employment Relation Advisors on 07 3852 5177.