

Maximum patron capacity

Liquor Control Victoria (LCV) has a maximum patron capacity policy that guides how patron capacity is determined for a liquor licence.

Maximum patron capacity is the maximum number of patrons allowed on a licensed premises at any one time. This is to prevent overcrowding inside the venue and to minimise impacts on local amenity. Patron capacity may be used to calculate the application fee and annual licence fee payable by each licensee.

Applicants will be required to provide specific documentation in order for LCV to determine and endorse maximum patron capacity for a premises.

Under the *Liquor Control Reform Act 1998* (the Act) LCV can set a maximum patron capacity as a condition of a liquor licence. This is enforceable, and penalties apply for licensees who do not comply.

This factsheet explains how LCV determines maximum patron capacity for the purposes of the Act. It is the building owner's responsibility to ensure that building occupants comply with all other regulatory requirements.

Licences with a maximum patron capacity

Maximum patron capacity will be endorsed in respect of applications for the following new licences:

- general
- on-premises
- restaurant and cafe
- late night (on-premises and general)
- full club
- restricted club.

Some existing licences may also be endorsed with maximum patron capacities.

Maximum patron capacities may also be required on some major event licences where appropriate.

Determining maximum patron capacity

In the first instance, LCV will determine maximum patron capacity based on the maximum patron capacity stated within the most recently issued planning permit provided with the application.

If the planning permit does not contain a maximum patron capacity, or if the planning permit has not been granted by the local council prior to the grant of the liquor licence, applicants are encouraged to contact their local council to obtain a copy of an occupancy permit. LCV will then determine the maximum patron capacity based on the number stated on the occupancy permit.

In circumstances where neither the planning permit nor occupancy permit specify a maximum patron capacity, applicants are required to obtain a report from a registered building surveyor that states:

- the area in square metres available to the public for the whole of the internal premises (excluding toilets, passageways and the like) and (if applicable) for any external areas such as courtyards or decks, and
- the number of patrons that may be accommodated on the internal premises and (if applicable) on any external areas of the premises based on a ratio of one person per 0.75 square metres.

Please ensure that the report displays the building surveyor registration number.

Note: LCV may request a building report from a registered building surveyor showing a calculation based on a ratio of one person per 0.75 square metres if LCV considers that the capacity provided in the planning or occupancy permit is inaccurate or inappropriate. This may be requested in light of any information contained within the licence application and having regard to the objects of the Act.

Restaurant and cafe licences

For restaurant and cafe licences, tables and chairs must be available for at least 75 per cent of patrons. For example, if the licence states that maximum patron capacity is 100 patrons then there must be tables and chairs available for at least 75 patrons. Likewise, if there are tables and chairs available for only 50 patrons, a maximum of 66 patrons may be legally accommodated on the premises.

Patron capacity for specific areas

In addition to the overall maximum patron capacity for the licensed area, LCV may set separate patron capacities on specific areas within a licensed area, such as:

- balconies
- beer gardens.
- terraces and courtyards

Patron capacities allocated for specific areas are calculated in accordance with the methods listed above, as well as amenity considerations.

While LCV considers amenity as part of the patron number calculation, the relevant local council also retains responsibility for managing issues of amenity in each council region.

External areas

The overall maximum patron capacity for a licensed area is generally no larger than the maximum capacity allowed for the internal area of the premises.

This is to prevent overcrowding, and minimise sanitation and fire safety risks associated with patrons moving from outdoor to indoor areas, for example, to get a drink, to exit the premises or if it rains.

In some circumstances, LCV may consider increasing the overall maximum patron capacity to allow for external areas.

Applicants with external licensed areas who wish to apply for this increase can submit a building report from a registered building surveyor demonstrating that fire safety and sanitation arrangements for the additional patrons will be met.

Features of an external area that may support an increase to the overall maximum patron capacity include:

- an external area that is large compared to the internal area, such as a large beer garden
- effective weather proofing
- separate entrances and exits
- separate facilities such as bars and toilets.

Function and accommodation areas

Function and accommodation areas may be excluded from the overall maximum patron capacity, and may be given their own separate capacity limits.