



Hon. George Souris M.P
Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing
Minister for the Arts

MEDIA RELEASE

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LICENSEES WARNED: THREE STRIKES TO START IN NEW YEAR

Licensees across NSW are being urged to review their operations to reduce the risk of committing liquor offences over the busy summer period, with the NSW Government's Three Strikes and You're Out scheme coming in to force on New Year's Day.

Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality, Racing and the Arts, George Souris, today announced the starting date for the strict new scheme which imposes some of the toughest ever sanctions on irresponsible pubs, clubs and bottleshops.

Mr Souris said NSW Trade and Investment Director General Mark Paterson is writing to every licensee in NSW serving notice of the January 1 start and urging them to take action now to avoid offences and strikes.

"More than 22,000 licensees and approved managers will receive letters and a detailed fact sheet outlining precisely how the scheme will operate including over 2,100 pubs, 1,400 registered clubs, 7,800 restaurants, nightclubs and other entertainment venues, and 2,000 bottleshops," he said.

"While most licensees do the right thing, this scheme is about weeding out rogue operators who wilfully or knowingly commit serious liquor offences and continually put the safety of patrons and the broader community at risk.

"It is paramount that all licensees understand the potential consequences of this new scheme: three convictions for serious liquor offences can result in three strikes and loss of your liquor licence.

"Licensees are put on notice that now is the time to review their business practices and alcohol and security management plans to reduce the risk of incidents that can lead to liquor offences and strikes being incurred.

"Venues have the opportunity to change their operations to avoid severe sanctions including the loss of licence by proactively managing any risks with measures such as a higher level of security, better monitoring of patron service and consumption, and more vigilance in refusal of service of alcohol to identified patrons.

"Holding a liquor licence is a big privilege and responsibility and if you abuse it you could soon lose it.

"The new scheme will start immediately after midnight on New Year's Eve in time for the busy summer holiday period.

"Patrons are also on notice that police will be targeting those who think it is acceptable to drink to excess and engage in violent and anti-social behaviour.

“Anyone refusing to leave a venue when requested by staff, or attempting to re-enter or remaining in the vicinity once ejected, will cop a \$550 on-the-spot fine.

“Police will also be using strengthened move on powers to target intoxicated individuals. Those who engage in disorderly conduct in any public place after being given a move on direction by police are committing an offence, with fines of up to \$660.

“The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing (OLGR) is currently implementing systems and procedures to ensure the Three Strikes and You’re Out scheme operates fairly and effectively.

“This includes changes to the State’s liquor licensing database, development of a public registry of strikes against licensed venues and effective protocols between OLGR, NSW Police and the Attorney-General’s Department to ensure the currency and accuracy of convictions used in the scheme.

“OLGR is also available to provide licensees with expert advice and assistance in improving alcohol and security management before the scheme starts.

“Licensed venues putting in place strategies to prevent violence, intoxication, underage drinking and illicit drug use on premises will avoid offences and strikes.

“Those choosing to continue to operate irresponsibly and with disregard for the liquor laws will be caught by this scheme.

“Upon conviction of a serious liquor offence the first strike is automatic and the licensee will be on a path which could lead to the ultimate sanction of licence cancellation if they don’t lift their game.

“A second and third strike can be incurred upon further offence convictions within three years.

“Offences include permitting intoxication, violent behaviour and illicit drug use on the premises, supplying alcohol to a minor or an intoxicated patron, selling alcohol outside authorised trading hours, failing to comply with an official direction, non compliance with a closure order and breaching key licence conditions.

“A third strike can result in licence suspension for up to a year, licence cancellation, a moratorium on a new liquor licence being granted to the venue operators for up to 12 months, or disqualification of a licensee for any period of time.

“In the case of a registered club a third strike can result in disqualification of a club secretary, dismissal of any or all of the club directors, or the appointment of an administrator to manage the club.”

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