



*DISCLAIMER: This fact sheet is intended to be used as a general guide only. You should not act on the basis of this fact sheet alone without first getting legal advice about your own particular situation. This was updated on June 2023.*

# **BOUNCERS AND SECURITY GUARDS**

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When you go to nightclubs, concerts and shopping centres, you are often greeted by bouncers or security guards. Bouncers and security guards patrol the premises and are also responsible for keeping the premises safe. You should understand your basic rights when it comes to clubbing or shopping, and how to conduct yourself in the event of conflict.

## WHAT ARE BouncERS AND SECURITY GUARDS?

### Security Guards

Security guards are employed to protect, watch or guard any property by any means including:

- By patrolling the property in person; and
- By monitoring the property by CCTV, a closed monitoring system, radio or other similar alarm device.

### Bouncers

Bouncers are a type of security guard.

Bouncers are privately employed by the owners of the premises to protect its patrons, staff and the property of the venue. When facing bouncers, you need to remember that as a patron of the club/pub/concert, they are there to protect you as well as others. Bouncers must wear, on their chest, numbered identification tags printed with the word SECURITY when on the job.

Bouncers and security guards do not have any more power than the ordinary person, and are there on behalf of the owners of the venue to regulate the 'house rules'.

## BouncERS AND SECURITY GUARDS' POWERS

### Ask for Identification

Bouncers and security guards can ask for your identification to determine your age if there are conditions for entry at the venue regarding age.

In Victoria, legally acceptable photo identification is any of the following:

- Australian Drivers' Licence;
- Key Pass Card;
- Proof of Age Card;
- Passport; and
- Victorian Learner Permit (note: learner permits from other states are not acceptable).

### Eject Individuals from Premises

Bouncers and security guards can use reasonable force to eject individuals from the premises to control a situation. This does not mean they can assault you.

Their power to use reasonable force does not apply if:

- they are not within the venue or immediate surrounds; or
- if they are off duty.

For example: they may hold you by your shoulders as they remove you from the premises, but they cannot hit you or abuse you after you have exited the premises.

## Refuse Entry

Bouncers and security guards have the right to refuse entry according to the rules of the premises ('house rules').

For example: signs of excess intoxication can warrant refusal into the premises.

They CANNOT discriminate against you because of your race, disability, sexual preference, or gender.

## Arrest and Detain

Bouncers and security guards can arrest and detain you until the police arrive, in the event of assault or property damage. However, they are not the police, and do not have powers that the police have.

See below under 'What they cannot do'.

## WHAT THEY CANNOT DO

Bouncers and security guards are not the police. Even though they can arrest and detain you, this is what is called a 'citizen's arrest', which means that the power they have to arrest and detain are powers that every citizen has in order to detain someone until the police arrive.

Their power to arrest or detain is limited to situations when you've been caught 'red-handed' committing an offence. They do not have the power to ask for your name or address. They cannot search you without your permission. However, many places (including shops, shopping centres, pubs and clubs) might have owners' rules requiring you to consent to searches (including bag searches). If you do not consent, you may be refused entry or asked to leave.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR DEALING WITH BOUNCERS AND SECURITY GUARDS

### Stay Calm

If approached by a bouncer or security guard, try to stay calm and avoid 'escalating' the situation (making the situation worse). If ejected from a venue, try to leave in a taxi or travel along main streets in view of witnesses. After being ejected, avoid walking down quiet streets alone.

### Stay with your Friend

If a bouncer or security guard is approaching a friend, stay close to them and stay calm. If a friend is ejected from a venue, go with them, make sure they are safe and stay together.

### Stay visible to the Cameras

Try to stay in sight of video surveillance cameras surrounding the venue. These are compulsory and can be checked by police later.

### Avoid Drinking Excessively

Try not to drink excessively. Drinking too much can impair your judgement, affect your memory of events if something does happen, or make you an 'easy target'.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN ASSAULTED

If you've been physically assaulted or verbally abused by a bouncer or security guard:

- Get the bouncer or security guard's identification number and their name;
- Get the names and contact details of any independent witnesses. Try to do this immediately because people can disperse quickly following an incident;
- Go to the nearest hospital with an Emergency Department to get your injuries assessed, ensure you get any medical treatment you need, and to have your injuries recorded by a professional for evidence. Take photos if the injuries are visible;
- Contact a friend to help you get the information you need, take you to the hospital, to assist you to make notes before you forget and to provide support during the process;
- Contact the police to report the assault;
- Seek advice about your legal options from a Community Legal Centre or Victoria Legal Aid. A lawyer can also assist you with making a statement to police;
- You can seek counselling and other support if you feel the need; and/or
- If you suffered intimidation, verbal abuse and threats, you can also complain to the venue (their employer) and to the Licensing Services Division.

If you've been sexually harassed by a bouncer or security guard (sexual harassment includes any conduct – physical, verbal or written – that is of a sexual nature which may have been unwelcome) try and get the bouncer's identification number and name. You can complain to their employer and to the Licensing Services Division.

## MORE INFORMATION

See the Law Handbook: <https://fls.org.au/law-handbook/rights-activism-and-fair-treatment-at-work/community-activism/protests-and-non-police-officials/>

## GETTING LEGAL HELP

### Licensing & Regulation Division

1300 651 645

Email: [licensingervices@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:licensingervices@police.vic.gov.au)

[www.police.vic.gov.au](http://www.police.vic.gov.au)

### Legal Help Victoria Legal Aid

1300 792 387

[www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au)

### Youthlaw

03 9113 9500

Email: [legal@youthlaw.asn.au](mailto:legal@youthlaw.asn.au)

[www.youthlaw.asn.au](http://www.youthlaw.asn.au)

Visit our website: [www.youthlaw.asn.au](http://www.youthlaw.asn.au)

Chat to us: 03 9113 9500

Email your questions: [legal@youthlaw.asn.au](mailto:legal@youthlaw.asn.au)

# YOUTHLAW

Young Peoples Legal Rights Centre

Inc No A0041616E

ABN 12 794 935 230