

## End of Season Celebrations

The practise of Football (or Football/ Netball) clubs celebrating their end of season with a trip away or 'Mad Monday' type event appears to be becoming more commonplace and can be a concern for clubs.

This document is designed to assist clubs deal with the risks posed by such events.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Participants in these 'end of season' celebrations often drink far in excess of what is recommended by health organisations. They either voluntarily engage in high risk drinking or are coerced into it by their peers.

### HEALTH RISKS:

The short term health risks of binge drinking are numerous and include:

- Headaches and nausea
- Vomiting
- Memory loss
- Loss of consciousness (and in extreme cases death)

Binge drinking also leads to an increased risk of damage to both the individual and property. People are more likely to engage in risky behaviour while intoxicated such as swimming, driving, unsafe sex and violence, with potentially horrific consequences.

Long term effects of repeated binge drinking include brain and liver damage, depression and problems at school, work or in relationships. (1)

### LEGAL RISKS:

Whether a football (or Football/ Netball) club would be liable for an injury suffered by a player or damage to property on an end of season trip or event will depend on the circumstances of each case. In particular, the extent of the club's involvement in the organising and running of the event and the foreseeability of the risk or damage that occurred. There is a risk that clubs could be liable if they promote and endorse these types of activities to their members and fail to warn them of the possible risks.

Clubs can reduce this risk by banning or discouraging their members from engaging in end of season activities (although naturally they cannot prevent players from organising their own), warning players of the health risks identified above and following the guidelines below.

### WHAT CAN CLUBS DO?

In order to reduce the risks to the individual and club, Football (or Football/ Netball) clubs should not endorse or support any end of season celebration that involves excessive drinking. This means clubs should not hold any fundraising events throughout the year that helps subsidise these activities.

If players still go ahead and organise their own event, the club should make it clear that it takes no responsibility for conducting it and express concern to members regarding their health and safety, as well as the potential for the activity to bring the image of the club into disrepute. Players should also be informed of any legal requirements regarding alcohol.

## HOW TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF ALCOHOL RELATED HARMS AT END OF SEASON EVENTS:

1. Meet with person / people organising the event and discuss what is planned. Identify possible risks and measures to be taken to reduce those risks.
2. Ensure no-one under 18 is involved in the event.
3. Clearly explain what the club considers acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Unacceptable behaviours should include:
  - a) Drunkenness
  - b) Drink driving
  - c) Damage to property
  - d) Violence & assault
  - e) Verbal abuse
  - f) Any form of harassment
  - g) Anything that may bring the image of the club into disrepute
  - h) Anything against the law (eg. under 18 drinking)
4. Meet with the whole group before they depart to explain the above – if this is not possible, meet with the organisers and ensure they inform other participants.
5. For trips away, encourage transport that does not require anyone to drive. Where someone will be driving a bus, assist to organise a trained driver or ensure at least two people will act as designated drivers.
6. Ensure driver(s) has an appropriate license and keeps zero blood alcohol content.
7. Encourage regular meals, snacks between meals and non-alcoholic hydration throughout the day.
8. Consider a 'buddy' system, whereby delegated participants agree not to drink and look after others.
9. Encourage the use of taxis or a bus (and driver).

## REFERENCES:

(1) NHMRC 2001 Australian Alcohol Guidelines: Health risks and benefits, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia

Disclaimer:

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