

Legal issues to consider when holding events

Legal information for Australian Capital Territory (ACT) community organisations



This fact sheet covers:

- permits that your community organisation may need to obtain prior to holding an event
 - what to think about when hiring a venue or equipment
 - copyright, marketing and promotions and other issues
 - event insurance
 - legal obligations around event safety
 - providing accessible events and activities
 - sponsorship for an event
 - raising money - laws that regulate fundraising in the ACT, and
 - tax considerations concerning events.
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This fact sheet outlines some of the main legal issues that ACT community organisations should consider when organising and holding an event in the ACT.

This fact sheet does not specifically cover issues for events run outside of the ACT, even if the organisation running the event is ACT-based. However, you will find that many of the same legal issues will need to be considered if you are running an event in another jurisdiction.

This fact sheet is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of all issues that your organisation should consider. Your organisation may need to get specific legal advice about its event plans and potential liability. This is general information and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice. If you have a legal issue, make sure you get advice.

Do we require permit(s) from the local council and other authorities for our event?

The permits or licences that your community organisation may need to obtain prior to holding an event (and for the duration of the event) will depend on:

- the type of event

- the activities to take place
- the facilities which will be provided to patrons and participants including any particular goods or services (such as food, alcohol, merchandise and games), and
- the particular requirements of the relevant local council and other authorities.

We recommend that you always check with your local council to see what council-specific permits, as well as other relevant authorities for specific permits (e.g. liquor licences from the [Access Canberra](#) website and the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission) you may require before running your event.

Events and activities which generally require permits or licences

Permits or licences are generally required for the following events and activities:

- holding an event on council or other public land
- setting up a temporary structure or using a venue for a purpose it is not designed for
- serving food to the public (for more information, see our [Events involving food](#) fact sheet)
- serving alcohol to the public (for more information, see our [Events involving alcohol](#) fact sheet)
- playing live or recorded music
- displaying signs and banners
- community gaming
- using gas cylinders to cook or for other purposes
- using an open flame
- using fireworks, and
- using the footpath or closing a road.

EXAMPLE

An event that you may need to close a road or footpath is a fun run.

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other permits required for your event.

For further information on events involving food, alcohol, travel and sport or adventure activities, see our specific fact sheets on the Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/events.

Ways to identify which permits may be needed

One way to identify local, state and federal permits, licences and registrations that are relevant to your event is to access the Australian Business Licence Information Service (**ABLIS**) at www.ablis.business.gov.au.

Although this website has been set up to help small businesses, it may be helpful for people involved in community organisations to work out some of the permits, licences or registrations your organisation may need. A link to the ABLIS service has been provided above and included in the Resources section below.

The Access Canberra website also has a large amount of information on the permit and licence requirements unique to the ACT.

Your community organisation may also want to contact the relevant local council(s) directly. Most councils have officers who can provide your organisation with information about permits, venue availability, public liability insurance requirements, selling food or alcohol and other issues associated with your event. This information may also be available on your local council's website.

Depending on the type and size of your event, some local councils will also ask for a risk management plan, and often provide detailed event planning guides to help you through the process.

What should we think about when hiring a venue or equipment?

Your organisation should be aware that an agreement to hire a venue or equipment is usually a legally enforceable contract.

It is important to read the terms and conditions of the contract carefully and make sure your organisation can comply with these. In particular, your organisation should be aware of the terms and conditions relating to insurance, liability indemnity (see below), and your organisation's obligations to repair or replace any damage to equipment or property.

You should also carefully consider your payment obligations and whether these will still apply if you need to cancel the event for any reason (such as not selling enough tickets). Please note that you may still have to comply with your contractual obligations under a hire agreement, even if your event does not run. You should seek specific legal advice if it becomes necessary to cancel your event.

Copyright, marketing and promotions

Playing recorded music or music videos at an event

If you are planning to play recorded music or music videos at your event, you may need to arrange a licence through the Phonographic Performance Company of Australia Limited (**PPCA**). PPCA is authorised by participating record labels to grant these licences and to collect licence fees. You will need a licence if the playing of recorded music or music videos at your event is considered a 'public performance' (meaning, in a non-domestic environment). Even if the performance or the event is given for free, or the audience is small, or there is no admission fee, or the performance is confined to members of a club, or a limited area, you may still require a licence.

CAUTION

Simply buying a CD or a DVD does not give your organisation the right to play that music or music video in a public setting or at a public event.



EXAMPLE



You will need to apply for a licence from PPCA if you plan to play recorded music at any of the following types of events:

- fetes, garden parties, school, church or dance academy concerts
- arts, fringe, food/wine, sporting, film and community festivals, as well as eisteddfods, exhibitions, fashion shows and similar events, and
- any ticketed multi-act music event (or part thereof) or not-for-profit events solely for underage participants.

While the PPCA provides licences covering the public performance of recordings and/or music videos of a song (a particular recorded performance), and represents the interests of recording artists and record labels, you may also need to consider obtaining a licence from the Australasian Performing Right Association (**APRA**) and/or Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners' Society (**AMCOS**). APRA/AMCOS provides licences covering the copyright in the song (lyrics, composition etc) and represents the interests of composers and publishers.

When your organisation wants to broadcast, communicate or publicly perform a recording, it will usually require two licences – one from APRA/AMCOS and one from PPCA.

EXAMPLE



You will need to apply for a licence from APRA/AMCOS if you plan any of the following for your event:

- music performed at events - for example, promoted concerts, dance parties and other performances
- recorded music and live entertainment used during the course of a sporting event, or
- use of music (including copying print music for use by community orchestras, bands, choir), such as by churches, community bands, choirs, orchestras, eisteddfods, dance schools and other groups/organisations.

Marketing and promotions

Before marketing an event you should ensure that you have the necessary permissions if you are using photographs, videos and text created or owned by other people. This also includes using photographs, videos, music or text on online forums (for example, your website or blog) or via social media forums. You will need permission from the copyright owner for materials that have been created by someone else. Please refer to the Australian Copyright Council website (www.copyright.org.au) for information about when permission is required and how to request permission to use copyrighted works.

FURTHER READING

There is more information in the Guide to Advertising and fact sheet on Facebook under the [Communications and Advertising section](#) on the Information Hub.

In addition, if you plan to take pictures or videos at your event and wish to use the images or film in a public forum, such as a website, brochure, newsletter, pamphlet or poster, you may need to seek permission from the people who appear in the content and/or the copyright owner. Seeking permission often means obtaining signed release forms from the people who appear in any images or videos you collect. A release form should explain what you will be using the image or video for, and you should not use the image or video for any purpose other than that stated. Further, some councils require you to obtain a permit before the event if you plan to take pictures or videos at your event.

Other issues

The price paid for certain event tickets may have tax implications for your organisation (see Tax Considerations below).

For further information on advertising, including misleading and deceptive conduct, see our specific fact sheet on Advertising on our Information Hub at www.nfplaw.org.au/advertising.

What about event insurance?

Getting your own insurance

As the organiser of an event, it is likely your community organisation will need to take out public liability insurance, particularly if your event is to be held on council or public land.

Often, the owner of the land or the venue you are wanting to hire will insist that your community organisation has public liability insurance of at least \$10 million. You should check with your local council for further information. Some councils and other organisations will also ask you to list them in your policy as an 'interested party' and will request a copy of the policy before giving permission to hold your event.

CAUTION

Your organisation should not ignore requirements set out in lease agreements or permit conditions.

CAUTION

It may be a condition of your agreement to use the land or venue, or a condition of a permit, that all parties providing entertainment are covered by your insurance. Make sure you carefully read all your agreements and permits well in advance of your event! You should check if the parties providing entertainment have their insurance.



Additional insurances

There may be a range of other insurances that your organisation will be required to get or will need to consider:

- if you are selling food or other products to the public – **product liability insurance**
- if you are relying on volunteers to help you with the event – **voluntary workers personal accident insurance**
- if you are hiring employees to help you with the event – **workers compensation insurance**, and
- if you are hiring independent contractors – review the agreements that you have with your independent contractors. Such agreements should specify the cover you need your independent contractors to have in place.

For more information about insurance, see our [Risk and Insurance page](#).

What are our legal obligations around event safety?

Your organisation will have a legal obligation to make sure the event is safe. Your organisation owes this obligation to the people involved in organising the event (volunteers, employees, independent contractors) and anyone who comes to the event (eg. members of the public).

Generally, organisers of an event will owe a duty of care (through the law of negligence) to participants in the event. Briefly, this means that an organisation must take reasonable precautions against any foreseeable risk of harm to individuals attending events. In determining liability, courts will assess whether your organisation should have reasonably foreseen that its activities and actions (or inaction) could have caused loss, damage or injury to a participant.

The legal obligation to ensure the event is safe may also arise under the ACT's work health and safety legislation (the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (ACT)) which applies to community organisations and has a very broad definition of 'workplace' which may include the event location.

For more information about occupational health and safety laws, see our [Occupational Health and Safety page](#).

Your local council should be able to provide specific advice in relation to safety, security and emergency procedures applicable to your community organisation's proposed event.

Depending on the nature of your event, you may need to ensure the safety of equipment, goods and persons. You may wish to consider whether you need to notify or organise for some groups to be at your event, including:

- the ACT Police
- the ACT Emergency Services Agency or State Emergency Service
- an appropriately qualified first aid provider, for example St John Ambulance
- private security, and/or
- the Australian Capital Territory Worksafe Authority (**WorkSafe ACT**).

WorkSafe ACT has a number of tools that your organisation can use to undertake a risk assessment of your proposed event - see the [Work Safe ACT website](#).

TIP

You should also consider whether you need to arrange background checks or Working with Children checks for certain individuals. See our page on [Background Checks](#).

Do we have to provide accessible events and activities?

Equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation applies in the ACT. These laws may prohibit discrimination against certain people on the basis of a person's impairment or disability, age, sex,

race, religious beliefs, status as a parent or carer, pregnancy or breastfeeding among many other attributes. Some exceptions to the laws apply.

In general, equal opportunity laws apply to prevent discrimination when providing goods and services to the public. They also apply in other circumstances (for example in employment, sporting activities, and membership of clubs).

Your organisation could be covered by these laws and should put in place reasonable measures to ensure that your event (and goods and services) are accessible to all people. Even if your organisation is not covered by these laws, it is best practice to do so.

See the Resources section below for further information on holding accessible events, including running events which are inclusive to people with hearing and/or vision impairments.

TIP

Before planning an event, check that the venue can reserve or allocate seating for people who use a wheelchair. Select accessible venues for individuals who may have physical disabilities such as hearing and sight limitations, and wheelchairs.



What about if we have sponsorship for the event?

If your community organisation is intending to share the cost of staging an event via sponsorship, it is recommended that you and your sponsor partner enter into a sponsorship agreement.

A sponsorship agreement will generally be a legally enforceable contract. Your organisation should be sure that it can comply with the terms of the contract, especially if there are any conditions around sponsorship money (eg. any requirement that your organisation refund sponsorship money if you do not meet your obligations under the agreement or if the event is cancelled). If you have any concerns about a proposed sponsorship agreement you should seek legal advice.

Our event is to raise money - are there laws that regulate fundraising in the ACT?

Yes. There are laws that regulate fundraising or 'charitable collection' in the ACT. In the ACT, the *Charitable Collections Act 2003* (ACT) defines 'charitable collection' as soliciting or receiving money or some other benefit with the representation that it is for a charitable purpose. This includes telephone appeals, public auctions, door knock appeals, tin collections, clothing bins and other activities that raise funds for charitable purposes.

If your community organisation is considering holding a fundraising event in the ACT or conducting any fundraising activities that are covered by fundraising laws in ACT you will need to obtain a charitable

collections licence. There are a number of exemptions to the requirement to obtain a licence. One example is where your organisation raises less than \$15,000 in a financial year.

There are also separate laws that regulate raffles, bingo and gaming which are administered by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

RELATED RESOURCES

For more information about fundraising law and gaming law requirements, see our Guide to Fundraising in the ACT and our fact sheet on Fundraising events involving minor gaming at www.nfplaw.org.au/fundraising.



What are our tax considerations concerning events

Tax considerations may apply to fundraising at your event. You should note that donations and contributions are treated differently.

Tax deductible gifts

If you want donors to be able to give tax deductible gifts or donations at your events, you need to be endorsed as a deductible gift recipient (**DGR**). Certain requirements need to be met in order to become a DGR or to satisfy tax deductibility requirements for benefiting donors. For further information, please see the Australian Tax Office website (www.ato.gov.au/non-profit/gifts-and-fundraising) and our Information Hub page on DGR at www.nfplaw.org.au/DGR.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)

You may also be required to pay GST if you are selling tickets to your event. Generally, if you are registered for GST and you are selling tickets to a fundraising dinner or similar function in the course of your organisation's activities, you must pay GST on the tickets you sell. However, you should seek specific tax advice in relation to this issue. There are GST concessions and rebates available to many charities and not-for-profits.

For further information see our specific fact sheet on Goods and Services Tax at (www.nfplaw.org.au/GST).

Other Issues

There are many other issues you may wish to consider when organising your event. The following is a non-exhaustive list:

Local Council

It is important to discuss your proposed event with the local council in order to find out the particular processes that might apply to the local council area, including any formal approvals that might be required and any particular rules or regulations that may apply to the location in which you wish to hold your event.

Noise management

Managing noise at events using public open spaces is also an important consideration. Local councils may place restrictions on noise levels, as well as limits on the use of amplification, unless written approval from the council has been obtained (eg. not to exceed 72dB when measured 3 metres from the sound source, or amplified sound must not start prior to, and must end by, certain times).

The ACT is divided into noise zones based on land uses approved in the Territory Plan. Noise Standards are set for each zone based on planning guidelines, Australian standards, interstate practice and noise monitoring data.

As an event organiser, you will need to consider the amenity of the surrounding area when running your event, including noise from music, broadcasts and amplified speeches, vehicles, event activities, lighting and patrons and then consider ways to mitigate potential disturbances of the neighbourhood.

Events with impact on public transport, roads and traffic

If your event is likely to be wholly or partly conducted on a road, require special traffic management arrangements or involves a large number of participants/spectators, then it will be considered a 'Special Event', and you will need to gain approval from the Roads Act Special Events Officer. Please be aware that your application may need to be lodged 6-12 weeks before the event. More information on the Roads Act and approvals go to www.tams.act.gov.au. If you do not think that your event will be considered a Special Event, but that there will still be an impact on public transport you should inform ACTION. Buses can be chartered from ACTION at a cost, and you will need to complete the [charter request form](#).

If the organisation of your event will require the whole or partial closure of any roads or otherwise disrupt road users, you should notify Roads ACT. The type of event, as determined by its impact on the roads, will determine whether further authorisation must be obtained. Generally you must lodge your application with the Roads ACT Special Events Officer at least 6 weeks prior to the event. Further information can be found in the Resources section below.

Handbills

'Handbills' includes leaflets, brochures, place cards, notices, pamphlets, free newspapers or other printed materials. You may wish to distribute handbills prior to and at your event. You should check whether there are any specific requirements set by your local council, including whether a specific permit is required or whether the handbill must contain any specific note (e.g. "Do Not Litter" in readable font).

Should we acknowledge traditional owners at our event?

An Acknowledgement of Country recognises that the ACT has an ancient and proud Aboriginal history and complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years. It pays respect to the traditional owners.

An Acknowledgement of Country should be given at formal events, forums and functions such as conferences, events, concerts, government and local government meetings and official openings etc. For more information, see the ['Welcome to Country'](#) page on the ACT Government Community Services website.

Checklist

Permits/Licences

- Food
- Alcohol
- Gaming
- Open flame
- Fireworks
- Using footpath or closing road

Copyright

- Licence from PPCA to play recorded music
- Licence from APRA or AMCOS

Insurance

- Product liability insurance
- Volunteer Workers Personal Accident insurance
- Workers compensation insurance

Accessibility

- Appropriate arrangements for individuals with disabilities

Sponsorship

Fundraising permit/licence

Contact local council

- Traffic management
- Noise management

Contact local police

- Traffic management

Acknowledgment of county



Resources

Related Not-for-profit Law Resources

The Not-for-profit Law Information Hub contains many fact sheets on different topics. It can be accessed at www.nfplaw.org.au. The following topics contain relevant further information:

✔ Risk and Insurance - www.nfplaw.org.au/riskinsurance

This page contains resources on background checks, occupational health and safety, negligence and incidents and accidents.

✔ Fundraising and Events - www.nfplaw.org.au/fundraisingandevents

This page contains resources on the main legal issues when fundraising in Tasmania.

✔ Communications and Advertising - www.nfplaw.org.au/comms

This section offers information on advertising and promotions and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Extra Related Resources

✔ [Access Canberra](#)

The Access Canberra website provides a variety of resources for planning community events.

✔ [Australian Business License and Information Service \(ABLIS\)](#)

The ABLIS system is designed for businesses but can be used by community organisations. Using the ABLIS search function you can find about licensing and your compliance obligations in ACT and nationwide.

✔ [ACT Territory and Municipal Services – Traffic Management](#)

For information regarding traffic management and planning special events

✔ [Australian Copyright Council](#)

For information about when permission is required and how to request permission to use copyrighted works.

✔ [Planning Safe Public Events Practical Guidelines](#)

These event planning Guidelines were developed by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department.

✔ [ACT Government Territory and Municipal Services](#)

For information about when approval is required for a Special Event that may disrupt transport or roads, and how to gain that approval. See also the [handbook](#) for further details.

✔ [Disability Advocacy Resource Unit](#)

This page has a link to event guidelines produced by Disability Access for people with a hearing impairments and a hearing checklist for events. It also has a link to event guidelines written by Vision Australia for people with vision impairment. You need to search or scroll down the page.

✔ [Checklist for running an event](#)

A quick reference guide to the common regulatory and compliance requirements that should be considered when planning your event. An event inquiry can be lodged on this website which can assist with the application and assessment process.

✔ [Resources for holding an accessible events](#)

A reference guide to making events accessible.

✔ [Voluntary Workers Personal Accident Insurance](#)

Community Underwriting has an insurance policy specifically designed for volunteers.

Legislation

✔ [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(ACT\)](#)

This is a link to the legislation which sets out the laws relating to workplace health and safety in ACT.

✔ [Human Rights Act 2004 \(ACT\)](#)

This is a link to the ACT legislation that includes specific provisions prohibiting discrimination when providing goods and services.

✔ [Charitable Collections Act 2003 \(ACT\)](#)

This is a link to the ACT legislation that regulates certain fundraising activities and events in the ACT.

✔ [Roads Act 1993](#)

This is a link to the ACT legislation that includes specific provisions relating to the disruption of roads and public transport during an event.

✔ [Public Unleased Land Act 2013](#)

This is a link to the ACT legislation that includes specific provisions relating to the use of public land including nature strips.

A Not-for-profit Law Information Hub resource. Access more resources at www.nfplaw.org.au

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