



Source: EI Group & Smarter Safety

Too much Christmas cheer can leave you with a liability!

Did you know that you can be held liable for the actions of your staff at a work Christmas Function?

Employers have a duty under workplace harassment and discrimination laws to take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment/discrimination from happening at work, and this extends to the workplace Christmas party! Beware of that typical scenario: Christmas party, a few drinks and then someone does or says something that offends another and it ends up having serious ongoing negative consequences for your staff and your business beyond that one night. Add the potential \$ cost of claim against you for the drunk actions of just one staff member at your party, which could be anywhere upwards of \$10,000!!!

Top 5 Tips On Having a Successful Christmas Party

1. Before your Christmas party make sure all your staff are informed of the appropriate standard of behaviour expected of them. It is worthwhile reiterating your Discrimination and Harassment Policy to all staff in the weeks leading up to your Christmas party and making it an item at all staff meetings. Most workplaces are going to want to celebrate the year with a few drinks, whilst this is certainly OK, managers should be responsible and remove anyone from the event that is too inebriated or acting inappropriately. If you are concerned about big drunken nights out, then perhaps hold a lunchtime party for work colleagues and make it a family affair inviting partners and kids along - people are less likely to drink to excess and get roudy around children.
2. Ensure there are good transport options to get everyone home safely! If you've removed anyone from the party for being too drunk, make sure you call them a cab and make sure they get in it! Employers could be liable for a workers compensation claim if an employee is seriously injured or killed while driving home from a work party, even if they are under the influence of alcohol.
3. It may seem obvious, but it's worth pointing it out anyway. Strippers, topless dancers and the like are really not appropriate at a work function - not even the end of year party.
4. Whilst it is a celebration for your managers, as much as it is for the rest of your team, it is worthwhile reminding your managers to act in a professional capacity during the evening and supervise the event.
5. Ensure the evening is fun and inclusive by considering things like appropriate catering and entertainment which emphasises fun and celebration, not drunk and disorderly! You should ensure that your catering is appropriate for a multicultural team (taking into account what some cultures can and cannot eat) and that your entertainment is not going to offend.