



Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation

Gambling Information Sheet

Bingo – what you need to know

This information sheet aims to help community and charitable organisations and their responsible nominees to understand the laws on running bingo.

What is bingo?

Bingo is a form of minor gaming allowed for the benefit of community and charitable organisations. Players receive a ticket(s) with randomly numbered squares, then players mark off the numbers as they are randomly drawn and announced. To win, a player must be the first to mark off all numbers on their ticket and call 'line', or 'pattern', or 'bingo' or make an audible noise or have another person call on his or her behalf.

A bingo session is when no more than 30 games of bingo are conducted within an eight-hour period. The aim of the game may vary depending on what version is being played.

Who can play bingo?

A person must be aged 18 years of age to play bingo.

Who can conduct bingo?

Bingo may be conducted for fundraising purposes by organisations declared (registered) by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) as a community or charitable organisation.

A bingo centre operator may also run bingo sessions on behalf of a declared community or charitable organisation. The bingo centre operator may charge a fee to run bingo and may recover their expenses up to a set limit.

As stated by the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* (the Act), a person cannot operate a bingo centre unless they hold a bingo centre operator's licence. Information about bingo centre operators can be found under 'Key persons involved in the conduct of bingo' of this information sheet.

Other organisations or persons can also run bingo where:

- no fee is charged to participate, either directly or indirectly, or the whole of the gross receipts from the bingo session are distributed as prizes during the session
- the session is not advertised or open to the public, is for the entertainment of the players and is not intended to provide a commercial benefit to the person conducting the session or anyone else.

Where can bingo be played?

Community and charitable organisations may run bingo as a fundraising activity in places such as local halls or club rooms but they need to be declared by the VCGLR in order to hold bingo sessions. Bingo can also be played in 'bingo centres'. A bingo centre is a venue or place in which sessions of bingo are regularly held on a commercial basis.

How do I become a declared community or charitable organisation?

To be declared (registered) the VCGLR will need to assess and determine that the organisation is conducted for community or charitable purposes (i.e. charitable, sporting or recreational purposes or is a registered political party). The VCGLR will advise in writing and include a registration number.

The application form, 'Declaration as a community or charitable organisation' is available on our website.

How to run bingo for profit?

If your organisation is already declared, an additional 'Notification of intention to conduct bingo sessions application form' must be lodged with the VCGLR at least seven days before the first session of bingo. This is regardless of whether you are running bingo sessions or having them run by a bingo centre operator for your organisation. Once the VCGLR have received your application, we will send a 'Notice of authorised bingo', which must be displayed in a prominent place at the venue.

If your organisation is not already declared, you must apply for it to be declared and you should allow at least 28 working days before the first session of bingo.

Note: No restrictions are placed on the number of sessions of bingo that can be run by, or for any, community or charitable organisation.

What sort of agreement can be entered into with a bingo centre operator?

A community or charitable organisation authorised to hold bingo may enter into an agreement with a licensed bingo centre operator in order to run bingo on the organisation's behalf.

The pro-forma agreement is a commercial contract between the community or charitable organisation and the bingo centre operator. The VCGLR prepared the agreement, which covers all legislative requirements.

There may be a maximum fee of two per cent from the gross receipts (total ticket sales) for each bingo session, which is to be paid to the operator for their services.

Please note: If the community or charitable organisation is assisting with the bingo sessions, no fee is required.

What are the rules of bingo?

A copy of the rules of bingo must be available for players at any bingo session. The rules must be followed and cover matters such as:

- application of the rules of bingo
- types of bingo
- bingo versions
- prizes
- admission, price of tickets, display of notice
- duties of the caller and the supervisor
- jackpots
- standards for bingo tickets
- standards for random number generators.

A community or charitable organisation or a bingo centre operator may apply to the VCGLR to vary the rules of bingo as they apply to them by submitting an 'Application for approval to vary bingo rules' form. If the VCGLR approves a variation to the rules of bingo, the organisation or operator must advise patrons by way of notices displayed and announcements and must comply with the varied rules.

The current rules of bingo and the different versions approved by the VCGLR are available on our website.

Can the rules of bingo be varied?

Yes. A community or charitable organisation or a bingo centre operator can apply to the VCGLR for approval to vary the rules of bingo that would otherwise apply to the organisation or operator.

If the VCGLR approve the variation, the organisation or operator must comply with the rules by displaying notices and making announcements as specified by the VCGLR.

If you wish to vary the bingo rules, download and complete the 'Application for approval to vary bingo rules' form.

When do I inform the VCGLR of changes?

The VCGLR must be notified of any of the following changes within seven days of the change occurring:

- the address of the premises where sessions are held
- the days of the week or the dates when they are held
- the start and finishing times of the sessions
- frequency of sessions
- number of games in each session
- the name and number of the account in which the proceeds from the sessions will be deposited and the name and branch of the approved deposit-taking institution holding the account.

The 'Notification of specified bingo changes application form' can be found on the VCGLR website.

Do I notify the VCGLR if I terminate bingo sessions?

If you intend to stop running sessions for longer than three months, you must tell the VCGLR by submitting a 'Notification of cessation of bingo sessions' application form within seven days of termination.

Other persons involved in the conduct of bingo

Nominee

When a community or charitable organisation has notified the VCGLR that it intends to conduct bingo either using its own volunteers or via an agreement with a bingo centre operator, the organisation must nominate a person to be responsible for the conduct of the bingo, this person is known as the nominee.

The nominee is responsible on behalf of the organisation for the running of bingo sessions, and is liable under the Act.

If the nominee resigns, is dismissed or leaves your organisation, another person must be nominated to be responsible for the conduct of bingo. The VCGLR must be notified by submitting a 'Notification of new bingo nominee' application form within seven days (or longer if permitted by the VCGLR in a particular case).

Please note: If your organisation does not have an approved nominee, the directors or the members of the managing committee of the organisation are all separately responsible and liable for the conduct of sessions of bingo until an individual is nominated and approved by the VCGLR.

Duties of the caller and supervisor

A person must be appointed as a caller, and another as a supervisor for each bingo game. Neither can participate as players during the bingo game.

A caller must:

- Before the commencement of the first bingo game:
 - announce which type of bingo and version will be played
 - announce that the call back of the numbers on the tickets can be done by the supervisor or another person in the presence of an independent player(s)
 - announce that it is the duty of the supervisor to determine any disputes about the playing of bingo.
- Select numbers using a random number generator or from a container that holds:
 - 90 balls numbered one to 90
 - 80 balls numbered one to 80
 - 75 balls numbered one to 75
- announce each selected number
- if numbers are selected from a container as specified in the Act, they must hand the ball to the supervisor.

The supervisor must:

- present each selected number and display clearly to all players until the end of the game
- if the numbers are being selected from a container, check that the number has been correctly announced and place it on a rack which is clearly visible to all players until the end of the game
- determine any disputes about bingo rules during any session that they are supervising.

The supervisor must (or select another person to) decide the winner of the bingo game by:

- collecting the winning bingo ticket from each player who has declared himself or herself to be the winner
- confirming the serial number (if any) and ticket book number (if any), of the ticket
- confirming that the ticket was sold for play in the relevant game
- verifying the numbers on the ticket against the numbers called in the presence of an independent player(s).

If the caller or supervisor notes an error in the calling or display of numbers, an announcement correcting the error must be made immediately.

Gaming industry employee

An individual may, within any period of seven days, perform duties as a volunteer for a bingo centre on behalf of charitable or community organisation. The volunteer is not required to hold a gaming industry employee's licence.

The community or charitable organisation must notify the VCGLR:

- no less than seven days before the individual commences at the bingo centre,
- no less than 28 days after the individual ceases to perform duties.

Recordkeeping and other information

Running sheets

The supervisor must keep a running sheet that records the following information for each bingo game:

- the serial numbers of the tickets sold
- the total number of tickets available to be
- the lowest and highest book number of tickets sold (start and finish selling numbers)
- the number of tickets sold

- the number of charges made for a visually-impaired person to enter the game (a visually-impaired person who brings approved braille ticket(s) to a session of bingo will be charged the same price for each of the game(s) in that session as if they had purchased tickets from that location)
- the gross receipts
- the value of prizes paid
- the gross profit.

A running sheet must be kept with the following information for each bingo session:

- the expenses paid
- the opening balance, and closing balance of any jackpot pool, and the date which the jackpot pool was carried forward
- the book number of any unsold book between the lowest book number for the session and the highest book number for the session (wasted book numbers).

A new bingo game cannot start until the running sheet for the previous game is completed.

Running sheets must be kept for three years after the games are recorded.

Unsold tickets

A community or charitable organisation must retain unsold tickets for six months after the date of the annual return.

Banking requirements

A single account, as approved by the VCGLR, must be maintained at an authorised deposit-taking institution in Victoria for all transactions relating to bingo. This account must be established in the organisation's name and be used for all financial transactions relating to the conduct of bingo and any other minor gaming activity. The records of this account must be kept for three years after the completion of the transactions to which they relate and be made available to the VCGLR on request.

A community or charitable organisation must pay the gross proceeds from a session (less the amount of any jackpot pool retained for distribution as prize money in a later session in a jackpot sequence) into an approved account:

- if the session was held in a bingo centre, within three days after the day on which the session was conducted
- within any other period that the VCGLR notifies in writing to the nominee.

Annual return

A community or charitable organisation must submit to the VCGLR an annual return for the period of 1 July to 30 June. The return should include:

- gross receipts
- total expenses (including catering and any fees paid to a bingo centre operator)
- serial numbers of any unsold tickets
- prizes paid
- the net proceeds of bingo
- the balance of each jackpot pool, if any, at the end of that month.

The annual return must be completed by 1 October each year.

This return is different to the annual return that bingo centre operators need to complete. Information about this is available on our website. There is also a link to the online lodgement system that bingo centre operators use to lodge their annual returns.

Requirements concerning prizes

The amount of prizes distributed in a bingo game must be:

- no less than 20 per cent of the gross receipts for the game
- in any period of seven consecutive days must be not less than 50 per cent and not more than 90 per cent of the total of the gross receipts for all bingo games in all sessions conducted in that period.

All prize money won in a game must be paid at the end of the game in cash, where the prize is less than \$1,000, or if the winner requests it or the prize is \$1,000 or more, by cheque not payable in cash.

Please note: the above requirements do not apply where no fee is being charged, directly or indirectly, to play the bingo games or where the whole of the gross receipts from the session of bingo is distributed as prizes during that session.

Large prizes

If you plan to conduct a session at which the prize value will or is expected to exceed \$20,000, you must advise the VCGLR by submitting a 'Notification of bingo prizes in excess of \$20,000' application form at least three business days beforehand.

Jackpots

Part of the gross receipts of one or more games in a session may be held in a jackpot pool for distribution as prize money:

- in a later game in that session
- in a game in a later session in a rolling jackpot sequence.

Note: Where more than one jackpot pool is maintained at once, only one of the jackpot pools may be in operation in a session.

Before the start of the first game in a session with a jackpot, the caller must announce:

- the game or games in which some or all of the jackpot pool will be distributed and the method of distribution
- if the jackpot is part of a rolling jackpot, the date of the session from which the jackpot pool is carried forward and the balance carried forward from that session.

After the last game in a session of games in a rolling jackpot sequence, the caller must announce:

- the closing balance of the jackpot pool
- the time, date and place of the next session in the sequence.

Pooling schemes

A pooling scheme, which usually operates for three years, is an arrangement, in which a person or organisation derives a direct or indirect benefit from the gross proceeds from a session of bingo games, and that person is not the holder of a minor gaming permit for that session.

To obtain a copy of the pooling scheme rules, contact the VCGLR on 1300 182 457 or, by email contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au.

Expenses

Where bingo is played in a bingo centre, the bingo centre operator may charge a community or charitable organisation for expenses up to a set limit. The prescribed maximum amount in relation to each session is:

- if the session is in a rolling jackpot sequence, 60 per cent of the amount remaining after deducting from the gross proceeds for that session the amount paid into the jackpot pool for distribution as prize money in a letter session in a rolling jackpot sequence.
- in all other cases, 60 per cent of the gross proceeds of the session.

Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct

A bingo centre operator must have an approved Responsible Gambling Code of Conduct approved by the VCGLR. Information about codes of conduct is available on our website.

Braille bingo

A person who conducts a session of bingo games must not refuse to allow a visually impaired person to participate in the session only because the person wishes to play bingo by means of a braille ticket in a form approved by the VCGLR.

Penalties

The VCGLR may take disciplinary action against a community or charitable organisation where:

- it fails to provide information required by the Act or provides information knowing it to be false or misleading
- there is a breach against the Act, the Regulations, any relevant rules made by the Commission, or a condition in relation to bingo
- the organisation, or an executive officer or nominee of the organisation, has been found guilty of a relevant offence
- the organisation has become an externally-administered body corporate
- for any reason the organisation is not suitable to conduct bingo.

A relevant offence means:

- an offence against the Act, or Gaming Regulation Regulations 2005 in relation to bingo
- an offence (in Victoria or elsewhere) involving fraud or dishonesty punishable by imprisonment for three months, or more (whether or not in addition to a fine).

The disciplinary action may result in:

- a letter of censure to the organisation
- a fine of up to 60 penalty units
- certain conditions may be placed on how the organisation conducts bingo sessions
- suspension of the organisation's authority to conduct bingo sessions for a certain period.

A community or charitable organisation may appeal within 28 days of being notified of the decision in writing and specify the grounds in which the disciplinary action should not be taken.

False or misleading information

A person, including a nominee, must not give false or misleading information when:

- notifying the VCGLR of an organisation's intention to conduct bingo sessions
- complying with a notice by a gambling or liquor inspector
- providing information to the VCGLR.

Application forms

All forms relating to the bingo are available at www.vcglr.vic.gov.au.

If you require further assistance or information, please contact VCGLR on 1300 182 457 or email contact@vcglr.vic.gov.au.

All mail for community or charitable organisation will be sent to the address provided by the relevant nominee.

Cease to carry out bingo sessions

If a community or charitable organisation decides to stop running bingo sessions for longer than three months, they must notify the VCGLR in writing and submit a 'Notification of intention to cease bingo sessions' application form available from the VCGLR website. This must be completed within seven days of ceasing the gaming activity.

Where a bingo centre operator is running the bingo sessions on behalf of a community or charitable organisation, then it is the bingo centre operator's responsibility to notify the VCGLR.

This publication avoids the use of legal language. Information about the law may have been summarised or expressed in general statements. This information should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional legal advice or reference to the actual legislation. Authorised by the Victorian Government.