



Security - The place you THINK you can't get ripped off!

Security is a serious and important issue for any formal. Nobody would deny that it's an item on your checklist that's essential to cover but few realise that this one thing alone can be the weak link in your chain of items that can see your entire event fail if you aren't careful. The following is a reported interpretation of how the law is applied in the case of Formals and other "Minor's Functions" as we understand the relevant legislation.

At first glance, it's easy to draw an assumption that if there's at least one "bouncer" on the door of your formal that you're covered for anything. If that's what you think, then you couldn't be more wrong.

Another assumption is that if the security you have is supported by either parents or teachers taking on a supervisory role at the formal, you're even better covered. Wrong again!

So what's the truth? Well before making assumptions or self-assessing what YOU think security should be, it's better to start the process properly and research what the government says, then build from there.

We'll use NSW as the best example because NSW has the toughest and most comprehensive legislation in place concerning formals and it's fair to say that if your event conforms to NSW standards, then you're in great shape no matter what state you're in. That being said, the other states have slightly different wordings of different acts but their all aiming for the same outcome.

Firstly, the venue must have the right licenses or permits in place before they're even allowed to advertise that they conduct formals. See one of our other fact sheets concerning venue licenses relating to formals but for now let's just say that you need to ask your venue to produce documents verifying that they possess the right clearance. If they refuse, can't or don't seem to know what you mean, this is cause for concern. If the venue needs the permits, they must produce them, if they don't need them, they should know this and be able to tell you. If they don't know either way, they may not be properly qualified to handle your booking. If you take on a package with such a venue, your event may or may not be illegal and therefore may or may not have valid insurance if anything goes wrong. This would mean that you, as the organiser, or even the school, could potentially be liable for damages in a law suit.

Next, provided the licensing issues are OK, the law *generally* states that for every 100 guests (or part thereof) that attend the formal, there has to be at least 1 Security Guard present for the whole event. Now that "part thereof" means that if you have 101 guests, there has to be at least 2 guards, 201 - 3 guards and so on.

Now that number of guards is the absolute bare minimum under the law. You really should, and the venue should assist you work this out, see just how many guards you actually **need** to secure the formal **properly**. For instance, at a venue like the Four Points by Sheraton, a 250 guest Formal needs only 3 guards by law but really needs 4 guards to work properly. The same 250 guests at the Sheraton on the Park however really needs 8 guards. Both are Sheratons and the same number of guests but double the guards. This is because you have to take into account how many sets of stairs, fire exits, access points and common areas need to be patrolled or manned in order to keep the public out of your formal space and also to make sure that your guests don't wander into areas they're not permitted. Each venue has its own specific layout and the number of guards actually needed depends greatly on that layout.

That covers the "number" of personnel needed. What about the qualification of those people? That's equally as critical.

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In order to be a security guard at a formal, that person needs to be licensed under the Security & Protection Industry Act (in NSW or equivalent in your state), and that license must cover approval to secure both "Property" and "Persons". Next they have to possess valid Senior First Aid certification, RSA Accreditation and Working With Children Check Clearance. Again all of these may be called something different in each state so research that in your own area. They need to be under the control of a licensed and bonded Security Company and carry \$20 Million in Public Liability Insurance. Now if any person who undertakes any kind of security or supervisory role at a Formal who DOESN'T have all of those things, they're committing a crime and can be locked up, while at the same time making your formal an illegal event.

This brings me to the next point. Parents & Teachers acting as supervisors. They simply can't do that. It's not legal. For a parent or teacher to attend a formal, under the law, once they step onto licensed premises like a formal venue, they automatically become no different to any other ticket-holding formal guest. They have no greater powers, and can't assume any supervisory role whatsoever under the law. If they do, even something as simple as checking the toilets or telling someone to put out a cigarette, they're breaking the law. (The only exception we know of would be in very specific venues like registered clubs, where the formal is being conducted as an actual school excursion for educational or religious purposes, teachers are attending as part of their daily job, and permission notes are signed by parents. Social events do not count.)

Watch out for venues that emphasise parents or teachers in any way. This means that if you see a formal package deal being offered where they say something like "Teachers Come for Free" or "Minimum 5 Parents or Teachers Required to attend" this is a red flag and such venues should be avoided. Not only is there absolutely no legal requirement for any adults, whether parents or teachers, to attend a formal at all, there is absolutely no way they should be enticed or demanded by venues. When a venue tries to get you to bring teachers or parents, what they're really saying is that they aren't going to provide the necessary security team and want your own adults to take on that role for them. It's just not right and you shouldn't become a victim of that kind of sly and manipulative marketing. It's also illegal.

The other thing is the cost of security. It's actually the legal responsibility of the venue to provide the right security for your formal. It's not the client's responsibility. Therefore, that security component should be part of your ticket price. If your ticket price is stated at the top, but then in the fine print there's something about security costing extra, our opinion is that you're already being potentially ripped off before you start.

There are all sorts of additional points we could make about proper security. It's something that we're really proud of here at Prom Night Events. Our security procedures are the only ones that have been requested by both state and federal government departments because they're the most comprehensive and well accepted ever written for the formal industry.

If you have questions or concerns about your level of security, and you can't get answers from either venues or government in your state, by all means get in touch with us and we'll gladly steer you in the right direction.

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