

Starting Out: Stripping (club)



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Welcome to the Victorian sex industry!

This information is for people who are interested in, or currently providing sexually explicit entertainment within a strip club setting.

According to the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998, sexually explicit entertainment (SEE) generally refers to “live entertainment that may be performed for an audience, by a person performing an act of an explicit sexual nature, but does not include the provision of sexual services within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Sex Work Act 1994.”

Sexually explicit entertainers include strippers (club-based), topless waitering, lingerie waitering and topless bartending). This contrasts from out-call, agency-based or private stripping, in which a stripper may provide entertainment outside of a licenced venue (i.e. in someone’s private residence). Sex workers providing sexually explicit entertainment in licensed venues also greatly differ from other sex workers who engage in the provision of sexual services (i.e. full-service sex workers). A strip club (also known as a gentlemen’s club or lap dancing venue) is a business where strippers are subcontracted to provide sexually explicit entertainment to an audience. At the time of writing, Victorian strip clubs subcontract only female-presenting workers.

RhED would like to thank the sex workers that participated in the development of this resource and shared their insight and knowledge. We acknowledge that not everyone’s experience is going to be the same. If you need more information than this fact sheet provides, please call us, email or arrange an appointment with us for free confidential support.

Sexual Services vs Sexually Explicit Entertainment

It is important for strippers to acknowledge the differences between sexual services and sexually explicit entertainment to ensure that what they are providing is legally permitted within the context/space they are providing it in.

The Sex Work Act 1994 defines the following as sexual services:

- (a)** taking part with another person in an act of sexual penetration; and
- (b)** masturbating another person; and
- (c)** permitting one or more other persons to view any of the following occurring in their presence
 - (i)* two or more persons taking part in an act of sexual penetration;
 - (ii)* a person introducing (to any extent) an object or a part of their body into their own vagina or anus;

(iii) a person masturbating himself or herself or two or more persons masturbating themselves or each other or one or more of them— in circumstances in which—

(iv) there is any form of direct physical contact between any person viewing the occurrence and any person taking part in the occurrence; or

(v) any person viewing the occurrence is permitted or encouraged to masturbate himself or herself while viewing— and, for the purposes of this definition, a person may be regarded as being masturbated whether or not the genital part of his or her body is clothed or the masturbation results in orgasm;

Source: [Sex Work Act 1994](#)

Before you start

When starting in any new industry it's important to think about your goals and expectations. Within the sex industry it's important to also gain a clear understanding of what your personal boundaries and limits are. Here are some pointers from other sex workers to consider when starting out:

Have you ever been to a strip club before? One of the best ways to get an idea as to whether or not this type of sex work is right for you is to visit a strip club yourself. Often women customers are given free entry on certain nights of the week (i.e. this has historically been on a Friday night in Melbourne). Alternatively, if you have a friend who already works at a strip club, ask to see if they can put your name 'on the door' for discounted or free entry. Observe how strippers work on stage, with customers, and in private dances. Offering a tip or paying for a private dance may enable you to ask questions about the work itself and get a 'preview' of what the work may be like for you.

It is important to note that you do not need to necessarily know how to pole dance in order to work in a strip club. Often some degree of training is provided upon starting. If training is not formally provided, you can learn as you go and seek support from other strippers. If the club has a choreographer, you can also ask them for support. Some clubs may allow you to practice before, during or after your shift. Should you want to attain some pole dancing skills prior to or once working, to build your confidence and preventing some common pole-dance related injuries.

Stripping is a sales and marketing job; and developing those skills as you find your feet in the industry will be useful. Learning to use those transferable sales and marketing skills in stripping is not automatic, but over time you will learn how to apply your sales and/or marketing skills to stripping generally and to your 'stripping persona' specifically.

Privacy and stigma are important concepts to understand and contend with if you choose to work in the stripping (club) sector. Do you plan to be open about your work outside of work? Are you working a second job that may discriminate against you if they found out you worked in sexually explicit entertainment? How will your work in the industry impact upon your personal and professional relationships outside of the industry? How will the stigma associated with the sector influence you?

Strip clubs permit varying degrees of touching (excluding anything that can be considered a sexual service as defined within the Sex Work Act 1994). For instance, some clubs will permit the touching of the breasts in all types of dances. Other clubs may only permit touching of the breasts in VIP dances, and some not at all. It is important to decide what degree of touching you are comfortable with. Clubs that describe themselves as 'nontouching' venues may still permit some degree of touching. It is important to ask the club what degree of touching is allowed and not allowed. And remember, you ultimately decide what touching you are comfortable with within the parameters of the club chosen.

It is important to acknowledge that there is no guarantee that you will make a lot of money, and your earnings will often fluctuate throughout the year. Sometimes you may not profit above the house fee and may return from your shift with \$0 or less. Strippers often describe the fluctuations in earnings as the stripper "rollercoaster of earnings." Some strippers compensate during periods when earnings are less by having 'regulars' (returning customers), balancing a second or casual job alongside stripping during those periods, or simply by budgeting/financial planning. Strip clubs may encourage strippers to work during public holidays and local events, claiming that they are highly profitable nights. It is important for strippers to consider that whereas these events may be profitable for the club overall, they may not necessarily be profitable for strippers.

Shift choices and shift requirements are important to consider. Some clubs offer both day and night shifts; whilst other clubs only offer night shifts. Understand that 'shift work' can be challenging both physically and mentally; and it may take time for your body to adapt. Clubs also individually have minimum shift requirements. This means that some clubs will require that you work between 1-4 shifts a week and may require that you work certain days of the week (i.e. Friday or Saturday nights). Consider your other personal obligations and what might work best for you.

Choosing a club

As a stripper in a strip club you are considered selfemployed. This means you make the choice of which establishment you want to work at and that you're interviewing the strip club just as much as they are interviewing you.

In Victoria, there are currently around eight strip clubs you can choose to work from. The majority of these clubs are in the Melbourne CBD. Two clubs are located in regional Victoria. Most strip clubs in the Melbourne CBD will not permit you to work at more than one club at the same time (unless you are visiting from interstate). Be sure to check in with the club as to what their policies are in relation to this, as there have been cases historically of strippers banned/blacklisted from clubs in Victoria due to working at two clubs simultaneously.

Once you have decided upon a strip club to apply at, you will need to call, email, or fill out an application online. Calling the club is highly recommended (as opposed to emailing) as it allows you to ask what the process is for working there (i.e. interviewing vs. auditioning).

Consuming Alcohol & Tobacco at Work

Strip clubs with liquor licences often permit you to consume *some* alcohol at work, should you so desire. Should you choose to consume alcohol at work, be sure to do so responsibly. It is important never to leave your drink unattended, as drink spiking is a risk. Overconsumption of alcohol at work could lead to a drinking ban or being sent home early during a shift and could compromise your safety and well-being. There are many strippers who choose not to drink alcohol at work, but some may find it difficult informing clients of this.

Common examples of reasons given to customers as to why strippers may not be drinking alcohol at work have been:

- 1) needing to drive after work,
- 2) needing to be alert for an 8-12 hour shift,
- 3) alcohol intolerance,
- 4) taking medication that cannot be mixed with alcohol and beyond.

For strippers that do choose to consume alcohol at work and drive, it may be wise to explore alternative transport options to and from work on the shifts you choose to drink. If you have concerns or questions as they relate to alcohol consumption and work, contact RhED for further support or information.

All Victorian strip clubs have different policies as they relate to the consumption of tobacco at work. Some clubs will allow the consumption of tobacco in designated smoking areas, whilst others will not. If you are someone who consumes tobacco, be sure to ask during your interview or after receiving a contract what the strip club's policies are regarding tobacco consumption.

CONSIDERATIONS

Shifts

Very few strip clubs offer both day and night shifts. Most will offer night shifts, but the hours a club can stay open will (often) depend upon their liquor license. Some clubs require you to stay until they close, some offer precise 8 hours shift blocks that you can choose from, and other clubs will determine your finishing time depending on when you arrived, how busy the club is, and how many other strippers are rostered on for that night. Shifts can range from 6-12 hours.

How far are you willing to travel for work?

While working close to home may be an attractive option, make sure to consider how you might feel if you ran into someone you know. Consider how you plan to get to work; public transport, ubers/taxis or driving privately? How much will it cost you to get back and forth to work each week?

Club Size

Strip clubs in Victoria vary in terms of size and style of work. Some clubs in the Melbourne CBD are large (with upwards of 100 strippers rostered on during a shift), whilst others are smaller (with as little as 10 rostered on per shift). High volume clubs will often require working at a quicker pace, with increased competition amongst colleagues, and with a greater turnover of customers visiting throughout the night. In lower volume clubs, the pace of work is slower, and there may be fewer customers visiting often for longer periods of the night. It is important to consider what environment you feel most comfortable working within.

Interviews, Auditions and Trial Shifts

There are two common ways in which strip clubs in Victoria subcontract strippers: via interview or audition. Each club will vary in regards to how they conduct an interview and/or audition. If you need support in preparing for an interview or audition, contact RhED Health educators for more information.

Interviews

Interviews at a strip club can be either formal or informal. In an informal interview, you may be asked to review the strip club contract, provide a legal form of identification and choose an alias or pseudonym (otherwise known as a 'dancer name'). Oftentimes you will be able to do a trial shift immediately after the interview, should you choose to. Formal interviews will entail reading through the contract, providing a form of legal identification, and the interviewer taking a photograph of you in lingerie to be reviewed by management. It is advisable to prepare yourself as if you are ready to work (i.e. wear makeup, do your hair, wear lingerie that you would imagine yourself working in, etc). A contract is not often extended on the same day as the interview. Often with formal interviews, you are contacted within a day or two if the club chooses to offer you a contract. If you do not hear back from the club, this usually means that they do not intend to offer you work at that time.

Trial Shifts

Upon offering you a contract, some clubs may offer you a 'trial shift' or 'trial shift week.' This is a period in which you decide if the club is the right 'fit' for you. Usually during a trial shift or trial shift week you will either pay a reduced house fee or no house fee at all. Often by the end of this trial period, you will need to let management know whether or not you want to continue working at the trialed venue. The club, more often than not, has already decided to offer you the job prior to the trial shift. The trial shift is more for you to decide if the club feels 'right' for you and your work-style.

Auditions

Auditioning is a less common mode of subcontracting strippers in the state of Victoria. If a club subcontracts through an audition, you will be asked to attend the club at a specified date and time with a legal form of identification. They will provide instructions regarding what to wear and what you are required to do in the audition. Often the audition will involve wearing stripper attire, and doing a shortened stage set where you may be required to strip on stage (a typical stage set for strippers lasts approximately 10-15 minutes depending on the club). Usually upon completion of your audition, the manager will inform you as to whether or not they will be offering you a contract.

What to expect on a standard shift

Each strip club will operate slightly differently, but in general you can expect the following from a standard strip club shift:

Many workers come in to get ready for work at the strip club- hair, makeup, outfit. It is important to note that some clubs will require that you be ready by your start time, so arriving early if you plan to get ready at work is important to avoid being fined by the club. Some clubs require that you pay your house fee (usually to the house mum) before getting ready for your shift. Ensure that you are aware of your club's policies concerning beginning a shift, start times and house fee payment. Strip clubs have specific rooms for workers to get ready in which often, but not always, include mirrors, lockers, shower(s) etc.

You will need to bring your own things to get ready with (i.e. makeup, perfume, hair styling products and equipment) and looking after your property on-shift is entirely your responsibility. Some clubs provide you with a locker if you pay a deposit, whilst others base locker distribution on availability of lockers, seniority in the club, and/or the frequency of your work. Locks for lockers are usually the stripper's responsibility. Some clubs will provide you with towels upon request or upon paying a towel deposit that is reimbursed at the end of your shift. Some clubs have kitchen amenities that can be used during your shift (i.e. a refrigerator, microwave, electric kettle, coffee machine, etc). Additionally, some clubs will provide some form of snacks and/or food either for free or for purchase during your shift.

Stage Sets, Table Dances, Private Dances and VIP

A typical shift usually will involve needing to complete several stage sets throughout the night. A stage set involves performing onstage (sometimes solo, and sometimes with up to four other strippers) for a period of approximately 10-15 minutes. The amount of stage sets you will need to complete during your shift will vary with each club, and largely depends on how many strippers are rostered on for a shift on a given night.

During your stage set, you can make money through offering 'table dances'. Table dances involve stripping for a customer or group of customers on stage for (approximately) \$20 or \$50. The duration of table dance ranges, however most clubs state that a \$20 table dance should last for approximately 1 song (or 3-5 minutes). All strip clubs have different rules in relation to table dances, so be sure to ask what is permitted at the club you are working at. At many of the Melbourne CBD clubs, being late to or missing a stage set will result in you incurring a 'missed table' fine (ranging from \$20-\$50). To avoid this, most strippers will wear a watch and will write down their allocated stage times as they receive them on their wrist.

Apart from standard stage sets, you may be assigned other stage performances throughout the night. For example, it is common for many larger strip clubs in the Melbourne CBD to hold 'fantasy parades' or 'mega-strips' around midnight which usually require a group of strippers to parade around on stage for a song, with either their underwear or bras removed. If you decide you want to be a showgirl or a stripper who performs for functions, there may be additional stage performances required during your shift (some of these performances will be paid for, or your house fee for that shift will be reduced or eliminated).

The bulk of your earnings in a strip club will come from private and VIP dances. The duration and price for a private dance will vary from club to club, however it is common for a private dance to roughly be \$50 for 2-3 songs (or 10 minutes). Private dances are often done in 'semi-private' areas of the club (most private areas are not exclusively private and are often shared with other strippers and surveilled with CCTV and security/club bouncers).

VIP dances are usually conducted in spaces that are a bit more secluded than private areas and are usually done in 30 minute – one-hour slots. The costs associated with VIP dances can range between \$250-\$1000 depending on the club, whether touching is permitted, and length of time. Strip clubs often take a commission from VIP dances, so be sure to note what that commission is at your club, and when and how it is paid.

Public Liability Insurance

Some clubs may require or recommend public liability insurance if you are planning to engage in aerial work. This is relevant for many showgirls (and other dancers) that may engage in pole work, aerial hoop and/or silks. AIBI and Duck for Cover are often used amongst strippers in Victoria.

Collecting Payment from Dances and Discussing the Rules

It is always wise to collect payment from customers up front for all dances undertaken. For the most part, you will be paid in cash, however it is worth noting that some clubs use their own 'club money' (i.e. tipping dollars or 'funny money') which you will need to exchange for real money throughout the night or at the end of your shift. Strip clubs that use their own club money usually take a commission upon exchange. Additionally, some Victorian strip clubs may pay a portion of your earnings into your designated bank account (usually reserved for VIP dances). Check with your club as to what is their standard practice.

It is important to ensure that your earnings throughout the night are always on you or in a secure location. Many strippers will either opt for:

- Carrying their money on their wrist, secured with elastic bands
- Carried in a purse (if allowed)
- Secured to the ankle and shoe with the use of a garter and elastic bands.
- Secured in a personal work locker with a padlock (if available)

Collecting Payment from Dances and Discussing the Rules cont...

Many Melbourne CBD strip clubs will not permit manipulating the dance prices. At some clubs you will be penalised for 'over-charging' customers or undercutting other strippers by 'under-charging' customers, so determine exactly what your club's policies are in respect to dance prices. Asking for and accepting tips however is usually acceptable at all strip clubs.

In addition to collecting payments upfront, it is also wise before commencing the booking to outline the rules of the dance to the patron. The dance rules will always both depend on the particular club you work at and you. Let the customer know roughly how long the dance will go for (in songs or minutes), whether or not touching is allowed and where, and how much the cost of the dance is. Doing this prior to commencing the booking will ensure that the patron is aware of what is and is not allowed. Should the customer breach any rules of the dance (i.e. by inappropriate touching), you will be better positioned to cancel the service should you want to do so.

House Fees

Most strip clubs in Victoria have house fees. A house fee is a fee that a stripper pays to in order to provide sexually explicit entertainment in a particular venue. House fees are often paid at the start of the night, or soon after beginning your shift. Receipts are usually provided once the house fee is paid. The house fee amount is determined individually by each club and can range from \$40-\$150 depending on the club and time you start work. Be sure to ask about house fees at the interview or upon receiving a contract if your audition is successful. A small number of clubs may also offer additional fees for leaving early, avoiding stage sets and/or remaining clothed on stage.

Fines

Strip clubs may charge fines for breaching club policies, and these are often outlined in their contract. Fines may be issued for:

- Missing/arriving late to rostered stage-sets
- Not showing up for or cancelling a rostered shift
- Not providing a medical certificate for a cancelled shift
- Not fulfilling minimum shift requirements
- Inappropriate attire

Leaving Work & Safety

Often you will be ending your shift in the early hours of the morning (anywhere from 2:00am – 8:00am). It is important to ensure that you are aware of your personal safety when leaving the venue. Make sure that your earnings from the night are stored safely on your person or in your work bag. If you drive to and from work, it is wise to walk with someone else to your vehicle after work. At many clubs, security may offer to walk you to where you have parked your car.

Ubers and Taxis

If you are taking a taxi or uber to and/or from work, be sure to note the registration number (sometimes security at the club will do this as well as an added protection when leaving work). Historically, some strippers have experienced some safety concerns as they relate to taking taxis and ubers to and from work. It may be useful when booking a taxi or uber, to alter your pick-up / drop-off locations. In other words, if you are taking an uber home after work, having them pick you up a block or two away from the club (instead of right in front of the club) may be a way in which to better protect your privacy. Additionally, having the uber or taxi drop you off near your residence (as opposed to giving your exact address) may also be wise in protecting your privacy.

Health Considerations

Strippers may encounter unique health-related challenges in the course of their work.

Bursitis

According to BetterHealth Victoria, "Bursitis is caused by the inflammation of a bursa. A bursa is a small fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between bone and soft tissue (muscles, tendons and skin). A bursa (plural bursae) reduces friction and assists joint movement. When you overuse or injure a joint, a nearby bursa can become irritated or inflamed. The bursa fills with excess fluid, causing significant pain and restricting movement." In stripping, bursitis often happens to the knees after repeated floor work.

“Treatment options may include pain-relieving medications, cold packs, gentle mobilising exercises and rest. Anti-inflammatory medications or injections of corticosteroids may be used in cases of severe pain. If infection is present, as well as pain and swelling of the affected area, you may develop other symptoms, such as a raised temperature. Treatment with an appropriate antibiotic is necessary.” (BetterHealth VIC)

Refraining from floor work for a period of time and using cold packs can help to alleviate symptoms and reduce swelling. Using over the knee stockings, socks, or thigh highs can provide a slight cushioning to your knees which may reduce the possibility of bursitis in the knees. If you need to perform floor work during a show set (as a showgirl for instance), using knee pads may also be useful to prevent injury/further injury.

Carpal Tunnel

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a painful disorder of the hand caused by pressure on nerves that run through the wrist. Symptoms include numbness, pins and needles, and pain (particularly at night). Anything that causes swelling inside the wrist can cause carpal tunnel syndrome, including repetitive hand movements, pregnancy and arthritis. Possible treatments include rest, splinting, cortisone injections and surgery.” (BetterHealth VIC) In the context of stripping, carpal tunnel syndrome can happen particularly during pole-work. Ensuring that you warm up your wrists before and after pole-work can help you avoid risk of injury. Wrist protectors can be worn during stage shows/stage sets to provide extra support to prevent injury or further injury. Refraining from pole work that places excessive strain on the wrists will also help the healing process. To find out other tips and strategies to assist with carpal tunnel and related wrist injuries see: <https://www.polefitfreedom.com/protectwrists-pole-dancing/>

Shoulder (Rotator Cuff Tears)

According to Love Pole Kisses, “[r]otator cuff injuries are one of the most common in pole dancing and that’s because they can be caused by micro-trauma to the muscles over weeks, months or even years beforehand.” As such, rotator cuff injuries can be common for those strippers that engage in polework during their shifts. To treat rotator cuff tears, Love Pole Kisses recommends to “avoid doing anything that aggravates the pain and activities that involve reaching overhead. Once pain has subsided exercises to strengthen the shoulder can help towards a full recovery, you should have total rest from pole dancing until the area is free from discomfort.” Recovery may take 3-6 weeks depending on the extent of the injury and treatment regime. To find out more about rotator cuff tears and other related muscle injuries see: <https://lovepolekisses.com/training-safely/pole-dancing-muscle-injuries>

Blisters & The Right Shoes

Using the ‘right shoes’ is important in stripping. You are ‘on your feet’ for a period of 6-12 hours during a shift; dancing, running to stage, performing shows, giving lap dances, and climbing stairs (in some cases). Standard high heels will not suffice for working in a strip club. Investing in stripper/pole dancing high heels will be your (ongoing) lifeline at work. ‘Pleasers’ are a common brand of stripper/ pole dancing heels. Some local resources for stripper/pole dancing high heels can be found here:

<https://shoeme.com.au/>
<https://highheels.com.au/>
<https://spiceup.com.au/>
<https://www.beserk.com.au/>
<https://www.exoticfootwear.com.au/>

Bruising

Bruising is common in stripping, particularly (but not exclusively) when engaging in floor work and pole-work. Arnica or Hirudoid cream can help reduce bruising and the associated pain/swelling. Wearing thigh high/over the knee socks or thicker stockings may also help to reduce the risk of bruising on the legs.

Folliculitis

If you have finished a shift and realise that your buttocks suddenly bring back terrifying memories of puberty and pimples, do not panic! In other words, 'butt acne' is not an unusual thing for a stripper to have to deal with on a regular working basis. It is important to note however, that the spots on your bum are not quite the same as the spots on your face.

In stripping, your bottom is often exposed to a variety of surfaces throughout the night (some of which may not be the cleanliest of surfaces). This exposure to multiple irritants combined with sweaty work nights can make your buttocks fertile ground for blocked follicles, and hence bum spots. Some strippers use a blanket, scarf or handkerchief to sit on throughout the night; which can help. Being cautious about where you are sitting (or what you are sitting on) are ways to help reduce the chances of acquiring pimples on your rear.

For all strippers, particularly strippers using washoff tan, exfoliating with antibacterial soap and showering after your shift can help prevent new spots from forming and can help treat existing spots. There are many products out there that may help alleviate/treat symptoms. Benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, alpha-hydroxy acids (AHA) can be useful in treating folliculitis. Lotions and Cleansers with AHAs such as glycolic and lactic acids are often suggested as potential remedies. If at home treatments do not work, consulting with a dermatologist will equip you with alternative strategies and treatment options.

Piercings and the Logistics of Stripping

For those strippers with piercings (particularly pierced nipples, clitoral hoods, inner labia and navels), the logistics of stripping can get a bit tricky. Being cautious with stripping and choosing the right lingerie/outfits can make all the difference in ensuring that your piercing 'stays' where it's meant to be. Avoiding the use of very lacy items may help to prevent the accidental 'ripping out a piercing' dilemma. Wearing piercing jewellery that is 'work appropriate' (i.e. simple jewellery that is less likely to catch on fabric) if possible can also help. Should you have one of these emergencies at work, do ask the house mum for a first aid kit. All clubs should have first aid kits onsite; however, it is wise to pack a mini first aid kit in your work bag or store it in your locker (if you have one).

Shift Work and Sleep

The majority of club-based strippers engage in shift work, with a minority working during the day. Many strippers will finish their shifts between the hours of 2:00 am and 9:00 am (depending on their start times and respective club), and will be ready for 'bedtime' amidst the buzz of morning joggers.

Good sleep hygiene is essential in the context of shift work. Some ways to help 'get your sleep on' and tune out the blaring lorikeets are:

- Invest in blackout curtains/blinds
- Earplugs
- Eye masks (especially if you do not own or have access to blackout curtains/blinds)
- Giving yourself a 'wind down' hour post-shift.
- Take a bath, do some light stretching, have tea/warm milk, and try and stay away from overly stimulating activities (i.e. put your phone down and turn off the TV!)

Other sleep aids can be used if you are really struggling with shift work. Melatonin for instance can be used to assist with sleeping. Consult with your GP if you are struggling with adapting to shift work, as they will be able to assist you in making the right sleep aid 'choice' that is best for your particular circumstances.

If you need support with finding a sex worker friendly GP, contact RhED for a list of referrals.

Shoe Tip

Having a spare pair of shoes or shoe straps on you during a shift will be life-saving. Even a good quality pair of Pleasers can break during a shift (straps snapping off, heels breaking, bottom of shoe tearing, splits in materials, etc).

Often, there are 'left over' spare shoes in clubs for shoe emergency situations in the change rooms; but this is not always reliable (and sometimes you are left with a choice between using the 'wrong size' of a spare pair of shoes or cutting your shift short and going home).

Your work colleagues often may have a spare pair themselves, so do not be afraid to turn to your fellow colleagues during a shoe crisis!

Potential Challenges and Safety Concerns

In the course of your work, you may come across different challenges and safety concerns when working in a strip club. Unauthorised filming/ photographing sexually explicit content, fullrostering, blacklisting, drinking bans, managing the sharing of private information, and sexual assault are some of the potential risks to be aware of and prepared for in the event that they happen during your time in the industry.

Full-rostering and Blacklisting

Full-rostering occurs when management from a particular club decides to terminate the contractual agreement with you (sometimes abruptly and without a disclosed reason). In this instance, the stripper would receive a sms after they attempt to roster on for the week stating that “the roster is full.” If a stripper receives this message, there usually is no recourse apart from finding work elsewhere or attempting to re-apply at that club at a future date. Blacklisting (in the context of strip clubs) can occur if there has been a significant breach of club policies and means that a strip club has communicated this to other clubs, resulting in an inability or great difficulty for the stripper to find club-based stripping work at another local venue.

Drinking Bans

A club may issue a stripper with a drinking ban if the club determines that a stripper’s conduct has become problematic due to excessive alcohol consumption. These are often temporary but can last for a significant period of time depending on the circumstances.

Managing Privacy

Managing your privacy in the stripping world can be tricky, especially if you are seeking to establish regular customers. Often, strippers will create stripper social media accounts under their work alias (i.e. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok) and/ or have a separate phone number for work use. This enables many strippers to maintain their privacy and keep their work world separate from their private world, but still build business for themselves and the club.

Unauthorised Filming/Photography

Filming and photographing strippers working in clubs is not permitted. All strip clubs have signage internally advising of this. If you notice a patron filming or taking photos with their camera/phone camera, alert the nearest security guard. Security will usually take the patron’s phone to delete images/videos taken and will issue the patron with a verbal warning. Should the patron continue to film or photograph within the club, they will be removed from the venue.

There may be some instances in which filming and photographing is permitted within the strip club. If for instance a dance competition is taking place, or the club is working on new marketing material, there may be someone present to professionally film/photograph parts of the club, shows and/ or dancers. In these instances, you will often be informed of photographing/filming present with some advanced notice and you will be provided with a model release form, which you can choose to sign or not. If you have not signed a model release form, you will be advised when and where the filming/photography is occurring so that you can avoid unintentionally being in it.

Contact RhED for more support and information as is relates to unauthorised filming and photographing.

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is not something you should expect to experience at work. It is not a part of the job. However, it is something to be aware of as it can happen. This is of particular importance in licensed venues where the consumption of alcohol is present.

Strippers both working privately and in clubs have reported instances of physical and sexual assault which may include: digital penetration, physical restraint, touching, groping, kissing and/or licking without consent. Should this occur within the context of a licensed venue, be sure to report the act to security and/or the house mum immediately. Often in strip clubs, the recourse is to remove the customer from the venue or ban the customer for a period of time.

You are within your rights to call the police and file a police report should you choose to. Most clubs have CCTV surveillance in most areas of the club, which can be useful in this instance. Be sure to let the house mum know what you want to do regarding the situation.

Although there is no way to eliminate the potential of sexual assault in its entirety from occurring, there are certain strategies that can be used to possibly minimise risk. Certain dance moves are more conducive to maintaining physically dominant positions, whereas other dance moves may leave you a bit more vulnerable. For instance, front-facing dance moves allow the stripper more control. If the patron in this instance attempts to breach the dance rules (by inappropriate touching), you would be better positioned to prevent it from occurring either verbally or physically. Conversely, dance moves that involve turning your back to the customer, may leave the stripper in a more vulnerable position—you can no longer see the customer directly, and your ability to prevent certain actions/behaviours will be hindered.

RhED can offer further assistance, if you are physically and/or sexually assaulted at work. RhED can provide peer debriefing, referrals to sex worker-friendly psychologists and other mental health resources, information related to peer support groups, crisis supports (e.g. Centres Against Sexual Assault, The Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria and 1800 Respect) and can assist a worker in filing a report to police. RhED can also assist you in completing an Ugly Mug report.

Support

SACL (The Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria)

www.sacl.com.au/

24 hour crisis line: **1800 806 292**

The Sexual Assault Crisis Line Victoria (SACL) is a state-wide, after-hours, confidential, telephone crisis counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault.

1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732

National sexual assault & domestic family violence counselling service

CASA (Centres Against Sexual Assault)

www.casa.org.au

24 hour crisis line: **1800 806 292**

There are 14 CASAs across the state of Victoria and the Victorian Sexual Assault Crisis Line 2 (after hours).

These offer free, confidential 24 hour emergency or crisis care for victim/survivors of sexual assault.

This includes crisis counselling support, access to medical care and legal services as well as counselling support for adults who were abused in their childhood.

Stripper Etiquette

Stripper Etiquette Tip #1:

Do not discuss how much money you have made in the change room or to another dancer. This in short is taboo. If you know another stripper well, and it has been established that you are both comfortable discussing money—go for it—privately and discreetly. Otherwise, using generic statements are best: “I’ve done ok/ average.” “I had a really good night.” “I’ve done shit.” or “I think I’ve made my target.” These statements are ok. Also important to note, everyone’s ‘targets’ are different—respect this and do not make assumptions.

Stripper Etiquette Tip #2:

If there are customers sitting at the stage, do not approach them. This is considered “cutting the lunch” of the stripper(s) performing onstage. This also applies to a stripper (or strippers) already with group of customers. If the stripper(s) present invite you over, then you can proceed to join—but initiating this on your own is usually a stripper “no-no”.

Stripper Etiquette Tip #3:

If you are going to do 'double shows' or 'lesbian shows' with another dancer, always check in with them first to see what both of you are comfortable with. Doing this blind can lead to miscommunication and sometimes can lead to breaching another stripper's personal boundaries. It is often very difficult to find adequate time to have a discussion with the other stripper (or strippers) prior to the booking. More often than not, you will have only a few minutes to quickly assess what you are both comfortable with. It is highly recommended that you determine what you are comfortable with first and decide whether or not you are comfortable doing doubles or lesbian shows. Use quiet periods during your shifts to speak with other strippers and assess who you might feel comfortable doing doubles or lesbian shows with.

Visas

As long as you have the ability to work in Australia on your visa, it is legal to engage in club-based stripping in Victoria. If you need support with migration law, Department of Immigration and Citizenship or anything related to your visa, contact RhED directly.

Stripper Life-Hacks

Stripper Life-Hack #1:

Secure your money!!! Ensure that you have a method of 'storing' your money. Many strippers use their bank accounts to store their earnings, but you may have cash on hand at home in between deposits. Find a way to ensure that when you do have cash on hand, it is stored safely. Some strippers invest in personal safes and/or safety deposit boxes. Choose the method that fits within your life and individual circumstances!

Stripper Life-Hack #2:

Cheap perfume is your friend. Strippers often "re-spray" up in the changeroom several times a night—an expensive bottle is just not worth wasting. In Victoria brands like "Hello Kitty-Bubblegum" and "Britney Spears Fantasy Collection" have been commonly used.

Stripper Life-Hack #5:

There are many strippers that want to keep their identity private whilst working. One way in which strippers may choose to conceal their identity is through the wearing of wigs. Using a wig can be a quick and easy way to 'assume a work persona' and conceal your private identity.

Stripper Life-Hack #3:

Yes! You can work during your menstrual cycle. Cups, sponges and the traditional tampon will all suffice. If using a tampon, either tuck or cut the string (but ensure it is still retrievable). If you are at work and are unable to retrieve a 'lost tampon,' ask a friend on shift for assistance. Many have experienced this at least once in the industry, and they may be able to help!

Stripper Life-Hack #4:

Carrying superglue, electrical tape, mini-sewing kits, clear nail polish and hairspray can help with "costume fails." Superglue and electrical tape can be used for quick and dirty shoe repairs. Clear nail polish and hairspray can be helpful to prevent snags from turning into tears in your stockings/ knee highs and thigh highs. As already mentioned, it still is wise to carry extra outfits and shoes *just in case*.

Peer Groups

Stigma and not being 'out' to friends and family can make stripping an isolating profession. Navigating the different rules within club-based stripping can also at times be difficult. However, there are spaces where strippers come together to share information, network, debrief and support one another. Having a peer-based community who understands your experiences may help you to feel understood and supported without having to put in the emotional labour of trying to explain your work first. Outside of the social support, peer groups are also a great way to source information and ask questions regarding just about anything relating to the sex industry. Consider accessing these peer spaces;

[Salome's Circle](#)

[Stripperweb](#)

Glossary

Bartenders

Bartending may be clothed or topless. Topless bartending usually involves a substantially higher pay rate.

Bussies

Responsible for clearing used drink glasses around the club, cleaning the stages in between shows, assisting with props/shows, etc.

Cocktail Waitresses

Responsible for selling drinks on the floor or in private bookings/VIP bookings to dancers and customers

Emcee/MC/DJ

Often at larger clubs Emcees/MCs are hired or contracted to announce dancers to the stage, announce shows, control the show lighting and sound, etc. Most often they are cis-males working in these roles. DJs are often subcontracted to work particular shifts/events (i.e. the use of topless female to perform on stage). DJs may be female or male depending on how they are used within the club.

General Manager

Sits above the venue manager. It is less common to see the general manager onsite during one's shift.

Hostess

Often a cis-female responsible for facilitating the sale of dances, and sometimes the sale of VIP bookings and VIP club memberships. Not very common in small clubs but can be found in some of the larger clubs. An example of what a hostess may do to facilitate the sale of dances is assist customers in 'finding' a dancer to purchase dances from.

House Mum

Female worker in charge of looking after the wellbeing and work-related matters of the dancers. Usually in charge of doing the table roster during a shift, collecting house fees and fines, following up missed table fines, etc. Sits under the dance manager/dance coordinator.

Marketing Staf

Responsible for the commercial marketing of clubs (in print and digitally).

Reception/Front Desk

Person who sits near the entrance of a strip club. Responsible for collecting entrance fees, coat checking, taking functions booking, etc.

Security Guards

Contracted security guards responsible for the safety and wellbeing of everyone at the establishment

Show Choreographer/ Trainer

Person responsible for training showgirls/choreographing alongside showgirls. Often this is someone who has worked as a former show girl/stripper.

Strip Club Owner

Above the general manager. Often there are multiple 'owners' that own shares of the company. It is less common to see the owners onsite during one's shift.

Venue Manager

Manager most commonly present in the venue.

Common terminology used in stripping

Baby Stripper	Someone new to the stripping industry.
Cutting Lunch/Cutting Grass /Undercutting	'Stealing' another's customer. This can occur when for instance a dancer is speaking to one or more customers and another dancer begins to hustle the same group without invitation/asking.
Double-up	Working alongside another dancer to hustle.
Extras	Engaging in sexual services within strip clubs. Providing sexual services in this context is illegal and contravenes the Sex Work Act 1994. Clubs will have signage throughout the venue indicating this.
Floor-Work	Dancing whilst lying down on a floor or stage. Often involves moving one's legs in different directions sensually.
Funny money	Money produced by the strip club, to be used only in the strip club. Usually the club charges a commission from the customer for this transaction. The club often charges a commission afterwards from the dancer to change the money to normal currency.
Hustle	Selling dancing
Make it rain	The act of throwing money up in the air near or on a dancer, indicating that that money is for that particular dancer. More commonly used in the USA.
Motorboat	The act of shaking your breasts firmly in someone's face
Pineapple	\$50 note.
Reg/Regular	Returning client/patron.
Work-Wife	A regular working relationship between two dancers in which the two dancers frequently or exclusively hustle together.
Lesbian show	A sexually explicit performance in which oral sex is simulated by two or more female presenting strippers.
Private Dance	A dance that is often in a semi-private area (there are usually CCTV cameras, security guards and other dancers within that space, so it is never truly that 'private' in Victorian strip clubs operating under a liquor license.
Pole work	Pole dancing on the stage.
Stripper Christmas	Specific to Victorian strip clubs and refers to the "Tradie Break-Up" period the week leading up to Christmas. Considered to be one of the more profitable periods to work.
Stripper Glitter/Dust	Glitter commonly used in strip clubs; has a tendency to stay with you outside of the club.
Table Dance	A dance done on a stage/table/podium. Often this dance costs less than a private dance, usually involves no touching/restricted touching. It may or may not be a fully nude dance.
Time-Waster	Customer who tries to keep you as company without payment.
VIP	A longer, more expensive booking (often at least 30 minutes or more). Often VIP bookings come with special services determined by the club (ie a bottle of alcohol, VIP waitstaff, a more private area, etc).
Work the floor/Do a lap	Hustle on the main floor of the club.

Remember

Sex work is real work. You are working in a legitimate industry in Victoria. You have the same human rights as anyone else.

Wellbeing

The benefits of exercise and enough rest are self-evident, though sometime difficult to achieve, especially with the irregular hours that come with working in the sex industry. The secret seems to be choosing a form of exercise which you enjoy. This will in turn improve your quality of sleep.

Have you thought about who you are going to tell?

It's important to have people that you can talk with about your experiences in the sex industry. However, it can also sometimes be important to get away from your work completely and be in a space where no one knows what you do for a living. Consider who you may and who you may not tell and how you believe they will react. Contact RhED if you'd like any tips or support.

If you don't think you'll stay in the industry forever, do you have a plan for life after sex work?

Due to stigma and structural discrimination, some sex workers have reported difficulty moving on from sex work. Issues they have experienced include a lack of options, gaps in work history and difficulty in finding an alternative that offers the same flexibility or income. This is perpetuated by the stigma of sex work, and lack of understanding of transferrable skills sex work provides. RhED has a program called Pathways designed to help workers navigate these issues.

Information about how RhED can support you

RhED is a sex worker program in Victoria, supporting current and former sex workers. RhED is a program of Star Health and is staffed by people who have worked, or are working in the industry, and allies.

RhED maintains strict confidentiality and privacy around all issues and contacts with sex workers.

RhED provide:

Health education, information, support, referrals to sex worker-friendly services (such as accountants, GPs and counsellors) and advocacy to people who work in the sex industry. We do this by telephone, outreach and email.

Professional development workshops to sex workers who are starting out in the industry, working in the industry and just wanting to refresh skills. Some of our topics include working with disability, tax and finance, BDSM and kink, STIs and sexual health knowledge. If you have an idea for a workshop you'd like to see please reach out and let us know!

A free industry **magazine (RED)** twice yearly. This is circulated to all brothels and individuals who wish to subscribe. Subscription is free and if you would like to receive copies, please forward your name and postal address. Your name can be "The Occupier" and the magazine is delivered in a plain envelope.

A social group called **Red Rendezvous** meets on the last Wednesday of the month. Email and SMS reminders are sent the week prior. If you would like to be part of this, let us know. Usually 2-3 people turn up and often these are new workers, current workers or people who have left the industry and use it as a way of staying connected.

A weekly drop-in space called **Hustling to Health (H2H)**. This runs from 5:00pm – 9:00pm every Friday at 36 Greeves Street, St Kilda. Here workers can connect, get support, free dinner, shower, tea, coffee, clothing and safer sex/NSP supplies.

A weekly drop-in space at **St Kilda Gatehouse** on a Wednesday between 12pm - 5pm for workers to grab supplies, ask for referrals and information, or just have a chat.

An **Ugly Mug** reporting system. This is for reporting and warning system about dangerous, violent or nuisance clients or sex workers in Victoria. If you have any further questions, feel free to give us a call on 1800 458 752.