

**RETAIL
DRINKS
AUSTRALIA**

RETAIL DRINKS INDUSTRY

AWARDS 26

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



About the Awards Program

The **Retail Drinks Industry Awards** are the peak awards for Australia's retail liquor industry, saluting the year-round efforts made by people and companies in our industry to succeed in business, through superior customer service, product knowledge and outstanding professionalism.

Retail Drinks Australia is the national industry body representing the interests of Australia's retail liquor sector, providing unwavering leadership, advocacy, services and support for its members.

We are delighted to be able to run this important annual Awards Program. Each award category has been developed to recognise the success and hard work of people and companies in our industry; attracting hundreds of entries and guests; generating significant media interest; and acting as a platform to boost the profile of individuals, businesses and partners.

We encourage all members to support your **Retail Drinks Industry Awards**, look forward to receiving your nominations, and to seeing you in attendance at this year's Awards Presentation in Sydney on the 12th November 2026.

Cheers,

Michael Waters
Chief Executive Officer
Retail Drinks Australia

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2026 RETAIL DRINKS INDUSTRY AWARDS PROGRAM OVERVIEW



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Why should members nominate?

1. It's completely free for retailer members to nominate.
2. All nominated stores are 'mystery shopped', and nominees receive a free copy of their store's Mystery Shop Report, valued at over \$150 + GST.
3. Provides an opportunity to set your business apart from your competitors.
4. Opportunity to record, review and benchmark individual or business achievements.
5. Gain independent, credible and actionable feedback to improve your business.
6. Awards winners and finalists receive recognition of their achievements.

Awards Program Objectives:

- Celebrate exceptional individuals in the industry
- Provide a benchmark for businesses in the industry
- Showcase liquor retailing talent on a state and national scale
- Promote liquor retailing as a career
- Opportunity to connect with like-minded industry stakeholders

Awards Program Schedule:

1st August 2026 – Nomination period opens

31st August 2026 – Nomination period closes

September 2026 – Mystery Shopping & Judging

Mid-October 2026 – Awards Finalists announced & interviews

12th November 2026 – Awards Presentation Dinner

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Mystery Shop Report

Every Retailer Member that submits a completed nomination is independently 'mystery shopped', assessing the complete shopping experience, based on key criteria, including:

- Arrival experience & first impressions
- Store layout & appearance
- Product ranging & diversification
- Staff presentation, service, product knowledge, selling skills & the sales transaction
- Responsible service & compliance
- Overall customer experience

For **Online Liquor Retailers**, the mystery shop criteria includes design, content, structure and navigation, functionality, interactivity, the sales transaction, delivery, responsible service and compliance, and overall customer experience across the retailer's web, mobile and tablet sites.

With Liquor Regulators placing a greater focus on compliance, and with significant penalties for licensees found in breach, the process includes an assessment of regulatory compliance and adherence to our industry ID25 policy and purposefully, the mystery shoppers are young-looking adults, who should be asked for ID.

At the conclusion of the Program, stores receive a copy of their individual report, valued at over \$150, provided as one of the many services and benefits afforded to members.

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Retail Awards: Categories & Criteria

Liquor Store of the Year (<400m2 retail space)

This award pays tribute to the most outstanding bricks & mortar liquor stores in Australia, as recognised by both customer and industry peers, and will go to the business that demonstrates their commitment to succeed in business through superior customer service, product knowledge and professionalism.

Judging Criteria: *Nominees are independently mystery shopped and assessed against a set of criteria including arrival experience and first impressions, store layout and appearance, product ranging and diversification, staff presentation, customer service, product knowledge, sales skills and the sales transaction, responsible service and compliance and the overall customer experience.*

Finalists and awards winners in this category are decided based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer and Chain Retailer Members*

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Retail Awards: Categories & Criteria

Large Format Liquor Store of the Year (>400m2 retail space)

This award pays tribute to the most outstanding “large format” (greater than 400m2 retail space) bricks & mortar liquor stores, as recognised by both customer and industry peers, and will go to the business that demonstrates their commitment to succeed in business through superior customer service, product knowledge and professionalism.

Judging Criteria: *Nominees are independently mystery shopped and assessed against a set of criteria including arrival experience & first impressions, store layout & appearance, product ranging and diversification, staff presentation, customer service, product knowledge, sales skills and the sales transaction, responsible service & compliance and the overall customer experience.*

Finalists are decided based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer and Chain Retailer Members*

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Retail Awards: Categories & Criteria

Online Liquor Retailer of the Year

If you're a liquor retailer selling products and services to consumers online, then you are eligible to enter your 'online store' in this award. The winner of this prestigious award will not only excel in each criterion but will be a site that demonstrates it is more than the sum of its parts, and an embodiment of excellence for their customers.

Judging Criteria: *Nominees (or the nominated liquor store of the nominee) are independently mystery shopped and assessed against a set of criteria including design, content, structure and navigation, functionality, interactivity, the sales transaction, delivery, responsible service and compliance, and overall customer experience across the online liquor retailer's web, mobile and tablet sites.*

Finalists and awards winners in this category are decided based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer, Chain Retailer and Online Retailer Members*

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Retailer Awards: Categories & Criteria

Liquor Store Owner of the Year

This prestigious award acknowledges our industry's outstanding Liquor Store Owners across the country, exemplifying how independent liquor retailers can succeed in business in a highly competitive environment, while demonstrating outstanding and innovative leadership, strong HR procedures and a commitment to continuing to develop themselves, their employees, and contributing to the future viability and industry sustainability – a true industry leader!

Judging Criteria: *Nominees (or the nominated liquor store of the nominee) are independently mystery shopped and assessed against a set of criteria including arrival experience & first impressions, store layout & appearance, product ranging and diversification, staff presentation, customer service, product knowledge, sales skills and the sales transaction, responsible service & compliance and the overall customer experience.*

Finalists and the ultimate award winner in this category are decided based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer Members*

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Retail Awards: Categories & Criteria

Liquor Store Manager of the Year

This prestigious award recognises our industry's outstanding Liquor Store Managers, and rewards demonstration of outstanding leadership skills, a commitment to continuing to develop themselves and fellow employees, as well as a commitment to the store owner and to the overall success of the business – an emerging leader in the industry!

Judging Criteria: *There are three components to the judging process for this award, with each component carrying a set weighting.*

Finalists are determined based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score. All finalists are then interviewed by a select judging panel and assessed against a set of key criteria to determine the ultimate winner.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer, Chain Retailer, and Online Retailer Members.*

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Retail Awards: Categories & Criteria

Young Liquor Retailer of the Year

The Young Liquor Retailer of the Year Award aims to recognise and reward outstanding future retail liquor industry leaders and promotes the diversity of viable career opportunities available in the industry. Applicants will be judged on their hands-on retail skills, knowledge and application; innovation and marketing awareness; leadership potential; customer focus; personal presentation; and expertise within their current store environment. To be eligible, nominees must have at least 12 months' retail liquor experience and be 29 years of age or under as at the 31st December 2026. The nomination process consists of a written submission responding to several key criteria.

Judging Criteria: *There are three components to the judging process for this award, with each component carrying a set weighting.*

Finalists are determined based on: (1) the completed nomination; and (2) the independent audit/mystery shop score. All finalists are interviewed by a select judging panel and assessed against a set of key criteria to determine the ultimate winner.

Eligible to: *Independent Retailer, Chain Retailer, and Online Retailer Members*

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Supplier Awards: Categories & Criteria

Supplier of the Year

This award recognises and acknowledges the pre-eminent suppliers to liquor stores nationally across the various beverage categories (beer, wine & spirits). Nominations by Retailer Members should be based on a company's level of customer service, representation, delivery, invoicing, order follow up, and overall commitment to supporting their business and the retail liquor industry.

Services Partner of the Year

This award recognises and acknowledges the industry's most valued business service providers to liquor stores nationally, helping them to do business better across all aspects of retailing, and enabling their retail liquor business to run more efficiently and effectively. Nominations by Retailer Members should be based on a company's level of customer service, representation, delivery, invoicing, order follow up, and overall commitment to supporting their business.

Judging Criteria: Nominations, finalists and the ultimate winner in these two awards categories will be decided based on nominations received by Retailer Members.

Eligible to: Corporate Members; Associate Members; Suppliers (non-members).

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Supplier Awards: Categories & Criteria

Sales Representative of the Year

This award recognises and acknowledges the most professional sales and service representatives in the retail liquor industry and includes individuals across all beverage, non-beverage and services categories. Nominations by Retailer Members should be based on customer service, call regularity, product, category and market knowledge, and overall commitment to supporting their business and the retail liquor industry.

Judging Criteria: *There are two components to the judging process for this award, with each component carrying a set weighting. Finalists will be decided based on nominations received by Retailer Members. All finalists are then interviewed by Retail Drinks, and assessed against a set of key criteria, to determine the ultimate winner.*

Eligible to: *Corporate Members; Associate Members; Suppliers (non-members)*

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Terms & Conditions of Nomination:

Nomination period opens on 1st August 2026 and closes on 31st August 2026. Nominations, via retaildrinks.org.au, must be completed and submitted by 31st August 2026. Nominations received after this time may not be accepted. Nominations in all Retailer Awards categories are eligible by Retail Drinks Members only. Nominations must be completed in full, including written submissions where applicable. Incomplete nominations may not be accepted. Retailer Members who submit a completed nomination will be mystery shopped and will receive a copy of their store's Mystery Shopper Report at the conclusion of the Awards Program. Supplier Sales Representatives may be nominated in more than one category (e.g. Beer, Wine or Spirits), but can win in one category only, and must have made regular calls on stores as part of their role. Awards Finalists will be announced in early October 2026 via a media release and individually notified by phone and email. Awards Finalists in the Liquor Store Manager of the Year, Young Liquor Retailer of the Year, and Sales Representative of the Year categories will be contacted and scheduled for a 30 – 45-minute interview (virtual) conducted between 12th and 23rd October 2026. Failure to participate in the interview may result in the ineligibility to receive an Award. All judging decisions are final, and no communication will be entered into regarding the judging process or decisions. All information regarding entry and judging is strictly confidential.

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