

TIME OUT POLICY

Council Policy





TIME OUT POLICY

DATE ADOPTED	XXXXXXX
REVISED DATE	XXXXXXX
REVIEW DATE	XXXXXXX
REFERENCE	XXXXXXX
CM10 REFERENCE NUMBER	XXXXXXX
POLICY OWNER	Manager Digital Information & Customer
ASSOCIATED POLICIES & PROCEDURES	Dealing with Aggressive Customers Policy & Procedure Time Out Procedure XXXXXXX
ASSOCIATED LEGISLATIONS	<i>Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)</i> <i>Enclosed Lands Protection Act 1901 Commonwealth</i> <i>Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)</i>
REVIEW PERIOD	
This policy shall be reviewed and updated up to five (5) years or more often as necessary to ensure relevance.	

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out Council's approach to managing aggressive, threatening, or violent behaviour from customers or visitors. It establishes clear expectations for respectful conduct, outlines the actions Council may take when behaviour is unacceptable, and ensures the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of staff, councillors, and community members while accessing Council services or facilities.

Council is committed to providing accessible and respectful services to all customers. However, abuse directed at staff, councillors, or others will not be tolerated. Aggressive, threatening, or violent behaviour by customers or visitors to Council premises is unacceptable. Everyone, staff, councillors, and community members alike, has the right to be treated with courtesy and to work or do business free from intimidation.

In line with this Council notes the following:

Zero Tolerance for Violence: "Any behaviour that threatens safety will result in immediate action, such as asking the person to leave, contacting police, or issuing a Time-Out.

Fair Warning (when feasible): In most cases, staff or councillors will provide a warning if a customer's behaviour is inappropriate, giving them the opportunity to stop. However, if behaviour is extremely dangerous or unlawful, Council may act immediately to restrict the person's access without warning to protect safety. Where the incident occurs in a public place, police will be contacted without delay. In such cases, a formal decision to restrict access to Council premises, officials and officers will be made and communicated to the customer in writing as soon as possible.

Consistency and Equity: This policy applies to all customers across all services. No matter how valid a customer's underlying issue or frustration might be, it does not excuse harassment or violence toward staff.

Proportional Response: Any Time-Out on a customer's access will be proportionate to the behaviour and its impact.

Support for Staff: Council will support staff and Councillors in enforcing this policy. Staff and Councillors will be trained in de-escalation techniques and post-incident support will be made available.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council staff, contractors, councillors, and customers. It covers interactions across all Council-operated services, facilities, and communication channels, as well as behaviour within public Council spaces.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- a) Ensure the safety and wellbeing of Council staff and patrons.

- b) Provide a consistent, fair approach to managing aggressive or violent customer behaviour.
- c) Support staff in managing incidents professionally and confidently.
- d) Comply with legal and ethical responsibilities to maintain a safe workplace.

4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
All Council Staff, contractors, supervisors, Councillors	Identify and report aggressive behaviour; issue warnings and enact Time-Out procedures as trained.
Managers	Review incidents, determine the appropriate response duration, and issue formal communications regarding Time-Outs.
Directors	Provide approval to Managers to issue Time-Outs.
General Manager	Endorse policy and oversee appeals or escalated cases.
Rangers	Provide planned support to staff or councillors in situations where a customer is expected to display aggressive behaviour that, while not violent or overtly threatening, may still cause concern or should be approached with caution.

5. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Time-Out	A temporary restriction placed on a customer's access to Council services or premises due to inappropriate behaviour.
Aggressive Behaviour	Includes shouting, swearing, intimidation, threats, or physical actions. It also covers similar behaviour directed through phone calls, emails, or other communication channels.
Immediate Time-Out	An action taken without warning in response to dangerous or unlawful behaviour.

6. POLICY APPLICATION

6.1 Incident Response

- a. **De-escalation:** Staff or councillors will make reasonable effort to de-escalate the situation by issuing a clear verbal warning.
- b. **Removal from Location:** If the behaviour continues or escalates, the customer will be asked to leave the premises. Where the incident occurs in a public setting, the staff member or councillor may instead remove themselves from the location.
- c. **Police Involvement:** In severe cases, where behaviour is unlawful or presents a threat, police may be contacted. This may be done by any staff member, councillor or by a member of the public in the presence of others who are being threatened or witnessing the behaviour.

- d. **Incident Reporting:** An incident report will be completed and submitted through Council's Incident Reporting System. Appropriate follow-up actions will be taken in line with Council's Time Out Procedure.
- e. **Review and Escalation:** The responsible Manager will assess the incident and determine if further restrictions are required. If so, they will prepare a recommendation for the Director's approval. Once endorsed, the Manager may issue a formal written notice to the customer, setting out the duration and conditions of any extended restriction or Time-Out.

6.2 Time-Out Duration

- a. **Minor incidents:** Time-Out for the remainder of the day.
- b. **Moderate incidents or repeated behaviour:** 1–4-week suspension.
- c. **Severe or violent incidents:** extended Time-Out with specific processes to enable further service from Council, subject to review.

Note: Time-out durations must be proportionate and documented.

6.3 Review and Appeal

- a. Customers may appeal extended restrictions in writing to the General Manager.
- b. Appeals will be reviewed, and a response issued within 10 working days
- c. Long-term Time-Outs will be reviewed annually.

6.4 Staff Support

- a. Debriefings and support services are available following serious incidents, staff may contact Council's People Experience team to receive advice on services available.
- b. Ongoing training will be provided on conflict resolution and policy procedures.