

## Purpose

This policy describes Hume's expectations of customer behaviour and how we will respond to unreasonable customer behaviour, including those who are abusive or aggressive or who make unreasonable demands that divert Hume's time and resources away from its functions.

## Scope

This policy applies to responding to unreasonable behaviour towards Hume employees (including Hume paid employees, Hume volunteers, students on placement at Hume and Hume contractors) and guides all Hume employees who have direct contact with customers through any medium, including face to face interactions.

This policy will also inform customers of their responsibilities and the consequences of unreasonable behaviour when interacting with Hume.

When managing complaints about neighbourhood and tenancy issues, please refer to the Responsible Conduct Policy.

## Policy Statement

Hume aims to treat all its customers with courtesy, consideration, and respect and values the feedback of our customers which we use to inform improvements in our service delivery. Hume is committed to investigating complaints in a fair and transparent manner. Hume is also committed to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of our employees. As such, Hume expects customers to adhere to the same standards and demonstrate fair and reasonable treatment when dealing with Hume employees. On occasion Hume employees may experience unreasonable behaviour from customers. This policy outlines what unreasonable behaviour is and how we may respond to it.

Employees will ensure that best practice responses have been attempted prior to implementing this policy. This may include: Hume's complaint management process; active listening; and de-escalation strategies.

## Unreasonable behaviour

Unreasonable behaviour includes behaviour that is abusive, aggressive or which places unreasonable demands on Hume and, as a result, diverts Hume's time and resources away from its functions.

Some examples of unreasonable behaviour are as follows: -

- rude or offensive expressions, noises and gestures,
- verbal abuse of a personal nature, or against a particular subset of society,
- threatening or offensive behaviour,
- threats of physical violence against a person or property,
- making repeated unreasonable demands on our time and resources which includes raising issues, concerns or complaints which have already been investigated or dismissed, where minimal or no new evidence is presented.
- Any physical assault including throwing of items or attempted physical contact.

## How we will respond

If, in the opinion of a Hume employee, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made by a customer and directed towards a Hume employee, the Hume employee:

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- will clearly warn the customer that if the unreasonable behaviour continues the conversation will be terminated,
- may terminate the conversation if the unreasonable behaviour continues after a clear warning has been given.

Where a Hume employee terminates a conversation, the Hume employee will note this in the call record system and notify their manager of the situation as soon as practical.

Hume may report violence, damage to property or threatening behaviour to the police. If, in the opinion of a Hume manager, any correspondence to Hume contains prohibited, sexually explicit, obscene, or offensive materials, Hume may refer the matter to the police or other relevant authorities.

If, in the opinion of a Hume manager, a customer makes repeated unreasonable demands of Hume and the customer continues to contact Hume after all appropriate avenues of internal reviews or appeals have been exhausted:

- the Hume manager will notify the Hume executive manager of the situation, including a summary of the customer's concerns, and any proposed management strategies for consideration, and
- the Hume manager may contact the customer to advise them in writing of Hume's position and request that the unreasonable behaviour stops.

If the customer continues to make unreasonable demands, Hume may:

- require that all communication between the customer and Hume be in writing and give staff permission to terminate any future calls from the customer,
- decline to respond to any future correspondence and only act where, in the opinion of Hume, the correspondence raises specific, substantial or serious issues or concerns,
- limit the type or frequency of all communication between the customer and Hume,
- read and file subsequent correspondence but only acknowledge, or otherwise respond if the customer provides significant new information relating to their issue or concern, or the customer raises new issues which, in the opinion of Hume, warrants renewed action or a response by Hume,
- provide the customer with a specific contact person at Hume (or a representative of Hume) through which all communications must be directed,
- request that contact is made only through the customer's appointed representative.

If the customer continues to contact Hume after they have been advised of Hume's proposed course of action and after consideration of the customer's situation, Hume may advise the customer whether the consequences (such as those set out above) will apply.

If the customer wants to raise new issues or concerns, they will be able to do that through the usual methods.

Hume may terminate our services where it is deemed unlikely the behaviour will change or the behaviour causes a risk to the health and safety of our employees. We may also seek to terminate our services in line with the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* (NSW) (and apply to NCAT for a termination order) where the behaviour is deemed a breach of the tenancy. This includes criminal activity, threats, harassment, and intimidation towards a Hume employee.

In all situations referred to in this policy, Hume will document and maintain records of the customer interaction.

## Appeals

If Hume takes action in response to a customer's behaviour in accordance with this policy, the customer may request one review of this decision. The decision will be reviewed by a panel consisting of three members.

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If the review panel upholds the decision and the customer remains unsatisfied, Hume may appoint an independent third party to review our decision and the process in relation to procedural fairness.

## Responsibilities

Role or responsibility	Position or delegation level
Ensuring policy aligns with compliance obligations	Legal & Risk
Approving Policy	COO
Implementation	All employees
Approval to restrict access or contact	COO

## Records management

Employees must maintain all records relevant to administering this policy in SDM & Folio.

## Related Legislation and Documents

[NSW Ombudsman Unreasonable Conduct By A Complainant Manual](#),  
[Work Health & Safety Act 2011](#)  
[Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy](#)

## Feedback and questions

Customers can provide feedback at any time by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 1800 004 300

Decisions made under this policy may be reviewed or appealed. Please see our [Compliments, Complaints & Appeals Policy](#) for more information.

Hume employees may provide feedback about this document by emailing [feedback@humehousing.com.au](mailto:feedback@humehousing.com.au)

## Approval and Review Details

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Chief Operating Officer
Policy Owner	General Manager, Housing & Impact
Approval Date	August 2023
Next Review Date	August 2026