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Comms and engagement

☆ Not following

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✉ Send by email

Published 21/6/2022

## Dealing with difficult behaviour

At times, people can be upset, angry, challenging or emotional when lodging an enquiry or complaint. When dealing with these people it is important staff remain professional and treat them with courtesy and respect.

When responding to difficult behaviour or situations, remember to:

- be confident
- remain flexible
- be solution-focused
- discuss options and alternatives
- seek assistance from your supervisor if you are unsure of something

The EAR (Empathise, Apologise and Acknowledge, accept Responsibility) approach can be a useful tool when dealing with difficult behaviour.

	EAR method steps	Explanation of steps	Example
<b>E</b>	<b>Empathise</b> with the caller	Understand how the person is feeling	'I can see how that would have been a very upsetting experience at the polling place'
<b>A</b>	<b>Apologise</b> and acknowledge the problem	You do not have to agree with the elector, but you should express regret that there is a problem	'I am sorry you were disappointed with the outcome of your postal vote application'
<b>R</b>	Accept <b>Responsibility</b>	Take it upon yourself to solve the problem, this can include forwarding the call through to the appropriate area	'Whilst I am unable to answer your enquiry myself, I am able to transfer your call through to our Media Team. They would be best able to respond to your enquiry. Would you mind holding whilst I transfer you through to someone?'

Further guidance is available in [scripts to assist you when dealing with difficult behaviour](#).

Staff are supported in communicating that the following behaviour is not tolerated in our workplace:


- derogatory comments
- rudeness

- repeated swearing
- harassment
- aggression

If this occurs, staff should offer the person one warning that this behaviour is not acceptable. If it continues, tell them you will be unable to assist them any further (for example, if it is a telephone call, warn them you will hang up, or if the person is in the office, warn them you will ask them to leave).

In these situations use your discretion, but do not put yourself or other staff in an uncomfortable position or at risk of harm. If you are required to warn and/or terminate contact with a member of the public, inform your direct supervisor and record the engagement in the [Tool](#).

## Threatening behaviour

It is a serious matter if you receive any threat of harm to yourself, other staff or the AEC. If this does occur remember to keep calm and, in the instance of a telephone call, refer to the [Telephone threat checklist](#)  for guidance.

This must be reported immediately to Security and your manager.

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### Acknowledgement of Country

The AEC acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters, culture and community.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

### My Links

Organisational  
structure  
Corporate directory  
Coronavirus info  
Dates to remember  
AEC Teams sites

### My Apps

AEC Service Centre  
Aurion ESS  
ObjectiveIM  
Media monitoring

