

# Crowded Places Strategy

**December 2021**

Managing difficult customers on your premises can create challenges for you, your staff and the safety of other customers. With the vaccine mandate and the requirements under the Covid-19 Protection Framework, you may encounter customers who you do not wish to be on your premises for a range of reasons. In order to handle these situations, we have prepared guidance based on The Crowded Places Business Advisory Group.

The Crowded Places Business Advisory Group is a collaborative working group comprising representatives from selected national and/or sector groups that represent organisations that own, manage or create crowded places. The objective of the Business Advisory Group is to combine the resources and goodwill of members to increase the capability across New Zealand businesses to Deter, Detect, Delay and Respond to an attack or similar incident. It was set up with the support of New Zealand Police in March 2021 to support the Crowded places strategy.

## **What is the Crowded Places Strategy?**

The New Zealand Government has developed Protecting Our Crowded Places from Attack: New Zealand's Strategy to help owners and operators of crowded places protect the lives of people working in, using and visiting their crowded place. The strategy intends to preserve the public's use and enjoyment of crowded places, while ensuring that their safety has been considered. [Please see this link to the document.](#)

The message that New Zealand Police wants everyone to know, understand and remember in case they are involved in an attack at a crowded place is the following:

- **ESCAPE: Move quickly and quietly away from danger, but only if it is safe to do so.**
- **HIDE: Stay out of sight and silence your mobile phone.**
- **TELL: Call the Police by dialling 111 when it is safe.**

Members can download the self-assessment tool found [here](#), to assess how attractive their premises could be to an attack. There is also the resource of [how to recognise threats here](#).

If you are having an event on your premises then please see the following document about [security audits](#) as well.

There are some other strategies the business can also implement when dealing with tricky customers. It is a good time to ensure everyone in the team is on the same page when it comes to managing these customers. Abuse of your staff should not be tolerated, so talk through when they should walk away or decide not to continue to engage with the person.

### **Here are some tips for dealing with difficult customers:**

- Listen to the customer and try not to argue about the situation.
- Remain calm and speak slowly and softly (but clearly).
- Try not to take it personally, sometimes people are just having a bad day and although that doesn't excuse someone's behaviour, there could be a number of other factors that can explain why they are acting in that manner.
- Know when to get support, call a manager or owner for help if you are feeling uncomfortable or the situation is escalating.
- Follow your company guidelines when a customer doesn't want to comply with the rules. Know what type of behaviour might mean the Police are called.
- Have some prewritten dialogue to repeat to customers. This may cover mask use, scanning in or other requirements as they may all be new to the customer. For example: "For the safety of you, our team and other customers, we need you to comply with the rules and scan or sign in" "By observing the social distancing rules, it allows us to remain open and following the guidelines" "I know it can be a little harder to communicate with the mask on, but it's now a requirement for us to wear them."