

Technical Clarification: Treating Centrelink customer service areas for a NABERS rating

Problem definition:

Centrelink customer service offices generally have a large waiting area and an adjacent open plan consultation/customer service area. There is ambiguity around how these areas are treated since the general public (e.g. Centrelink customers) can access these areas.

Questions:

- How should the 'customer service area' be treated in the Rated Area calculation?
- How should the 'waiting area' be treated on the Rated Area calculation?

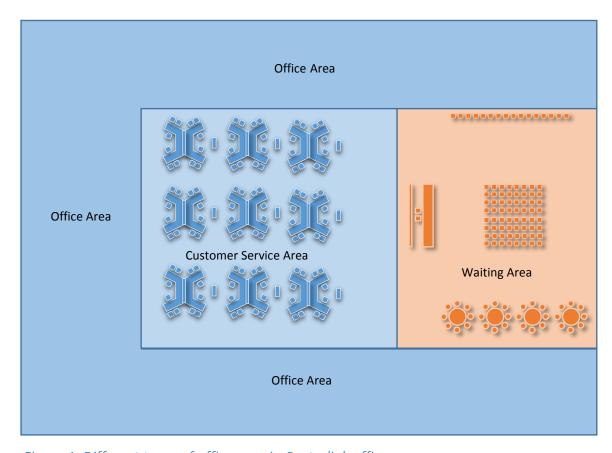


Figure 1. Different types of office area in Centrelink offices

Answers:

- The 'customer service area' is treated as normal office space.
- The 'waiting area' is treated as public access space and must be limited to 10% of the rated area as per the NABERS Rules.

Function and access requirements

Centrelink customer services offices follow a general pattern in their layout plan to support the basic functions of the office. Upon entry to the Centrelink office, there is a large waiting and self service area. There is no restriction on who can access this space and is used by Centrelink customers to:

- Meet their own needs using the self-help terminals;
- Use the telephones for phone services; and
- Make an appointment and wait to be called for consultation.

Once a customer service representative is appointed, the customer will either be escorted to the customer service area by the officer or allocated a customer service representative through a ticketing system. After the consultation, the customer either leaves the office or goes back to the waiting area. The consultation desks are placed further apart for privacy reasons.

The back office area is secure and can only be accessed by employees with a security key/pass. The function and layout of the back office resembles that of a normal office floor, with amenities and office support facilities such as kitchenettes, meeting rooms, server rooms etc.

Interpretation of the Rules

The 'customer service area' is included in the Rated Area, provided it is 'Fit for office use' because it shows the closest resemblance to a meeting room in a secure office. In a secure office, guests are escorted to meeting rooms by an occupant of the tenancy for meetings. Meeting spaces used by guests does not negate them being 'exclusively for the use of office tenants'.

The area also meets the definitions of:

- 'Office': The customer service area supports the core business of Centrelink and used primarily for administrative, clerical and similar information based activities. :
- 'Office support facility': It is for the exclusive use of Centrelink staff to conduct customer meetings. Customers are escorted by staff members while in this area. They do not enter on their own.

Therefore customer service consultation areas in Centrelink offices are treated as office support facilities and included in Rated Area. The waiting area is available to the general public and access is not limited. Although almost all members of the general public that use Centrelink facilities are customers, the space is accessible to the general public. It must be treated as per Section 3.6.4 'Limiting the proportion of public access space'- limited to not more than 10% of the total rateable area of the building.