



# **BARKING DOGS IN OUR COMMUNITY**

**All dogs bark, but in some cases the barking dogs may become a real neighbourhood nuisance - greatly reducing the quality of life for their neighbours and increasing neighbourhood tensions.**

**Council understands the value of enjoying a peaceful neighbourhood and appreciates that resolving noise nuisance complaints can sometimes be confronting or difficult. This information is provided to assist in understanding the roles of the aggrieved party, Council and the dog owner.**

## **My neighbour's dog barks, what can I do as an aggrieved party?**

### **Talk to your neighbour**

Your neighbour may not be aware that their dog is barking or that their dog's barking is bothering you. If the barking persists after a week or two, speak with your neighbour again to provide feedback.

If your neighbour is unapproachable, or does not agree that a problem exists, you should contact Council's Community Safety team for further advice on 1300 007 662.

### **Lodging a complaint**

Council will need the correct address of where the dog is kept, a description of the dog, a detailed list of dates, times and possible causes for the dog's barking, and how the barking is affecting you. This information will assist us to carry out a fair and impartial investigation and may also help the animal's owner understand and resolve any problems that may be contributing to excessive barking.

## **What can Council do to assist me?**

### **What happens to my complaint?**

In the first instance Council will contact the dog's owner and let them know that a complaint has been received. We will also provide the owner with information on why dogs bark excessively and suggest ways in which this can possibly be resolved.

Give your neighbour time - Understand that the dog owner needs time to fix the problem. There are no quick fixes to a barking problem. If however the excessive barking problem does not subside, Council needs to be advised so we can investigate the matter further.

## **Is my complaint going to be taken seriously?**

Yes, Council has a legal obligation to investigate all barking complaints, however some barking may not constitute a noise nuisance under the local law even if it annoys you.

Council must be satisfied that the dog/s is in fact creating a nuisance by barking. If Council is unable to determine that a nuisance exists it is unable to take any further action.

Council's investigation process forms part of a legal process and as such it is necessary to obtain sufficient information and evidence to confirm the existence of a nuisance. It is also necessary that Council satisfies the requirements of relevant legislation and provides reasonable time and notice to the owner of the offending dog. These matters are therefore unlikely to be resolved quickly.

If Council is satisfied that a nuisance exists, a notice may be served upon the keeper of the offending dog/s requiring them to reduce the nuisance. Should the keeper of the dog fail to comply with the notice, Council may issue a fine or commence legal or other action to resolve the matter. In the event that legal action is taken, all parties including the complainant and other witnesses may be asked to attend court to provide evidence.



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### My dog barks – What can I do as a dog owner?

Barking is a natural behaviour for dogs. It is one way in which they can communicate. A dog that barks excessively is often lonely, worried or protecting its territory/yard.

A dog's barking may become a problem if the dog barks when:

- left alone for extended periods of time
- you leave home
- people enter or pass your property
- the dog seeks attention.

You know your dog may be causing a noise nuisance by its barking when:

- your neighbours tell you
- a complaint has been made to Council
- it annoys you!

It is not Council's responsibility to resolve the problem for you. As the dog owner you need to firstly accept that your dog may be causing a problem and then take appropriate action to stop your dog barking excessively. These matters are unlikely to be resolved quickly and will take time.

Council is obligated to advise you that there are legal ramifications for not reducing a noise nuisance.

### Assess the problem

If you wish to reduce your dog's barking, you need to understand why he or she is barking. Ongoing barking is often a symptom of another problem and taking time to understand what makes your dog bark is the first step towards solving this problem, both for the dog involved and your neighbours.

### Why do dogs bark?

Dogs bark for a number of different reasons, including but not limited to:

- they are lonely (dogs are social animals)
- they are stressed about being separated from their owner
- they are bored, frustrated or seeking attention
- they think there is a threat to their territory
- they are excitable while playing
- some breeds have a reputation for barking
- some dominant dogs bark until they get what they want.

The most important first step is to work out why your dog is barking. Once you know the symptom, you can find the cure.

### Control the barking

Behavioural problems can be understood if you learn more about your pet's behaviour. Barking can be controlled through several small behavioural changes, some as small as walking your dog once a day to relieve boredom.

Seek professional help from an animal behaviourist or trainer, or talk to Council if necessary.

Help is available!

