

# Barking Dog Information Pack

## Why do dogs bark?

Dogs bark for many reasons and this often relates to how the dog is feeling. Dogs sometimes bark when they are:

- Lonely
- Bored
- Frustrated
- Protecting territory
- As a warning when feeling threatened
- Welfare Issue (This should be reported to RSPCA or Animal Welfare League)

Identifying the underlying cause of the barking will create greater success in terms of implementing training, exercise and environmental enrichment strategies to help alleviate the barking problem.

## Why are barking dogs difficult for Council to resolve?

- Each individual has a different view as to what a noise nuisance is and this varies as a result of the location of the dog, noise tolerance level of the complainant, the type of barking, and the time time/length of barking;
- Council need to ensure sufficient evidence is obtained to enable enforcement action. This includes the complainant collecting evidence;
- Complainants need to be agreeable to being a witness in Court if required;

- The dog owner is often not aware that their dog is being a nuisance barker;
- It is often difficult to identify which dog is responsible if more than one dog are kept at the property.

## Resolving the nuisance

Contact the dog owners first. Working with them to find a solution will achieve the best outcome. How you do this is your decision. You may decide to talk personally with the dog owner, by phone or in writing. A sample barking dog notification letter has been provided in this pack. You can choose to provide your name and contact details in the letter in case the dog owner wants to further discuss the issue. Explaining when the barking is occurring and why if you know what triggers the dog is helpful as it may be when the dog owner is not home and they may have no idea that their dog is causing a nuisance. In most cases, dog owners want to do the right thing and approaching them in a calm and friendly manner without judgement will help guide the discussion towards resolving the problem whilst keeping a good relationship with your neighbours.

Give the dog owner an opportunity to try and correct the problem and be prepared to assist with information. Wait a few weeks to see if any strategies implemented to reduce the barking are successful.

If you have attempted to resolve the matter with your neighbour and there is no improvement, you can make a report to Council.

In the first instance Council will send the dog owner a letter advising a complaint has been received regarding nuisance barking and requesting the dog owner take steps to reduce the nuisance.

## Community Justice Centre Assistance

If there is still no improvement after Council have contacted the dog owner, the complainant is required to seek assistance from a Community Justice Centre. You will be allocated a file number and arrangements will commence for a mediation session between neighbours. A mediator will assist you in finding a solution to the problem.

The Community Justice Centre will provide you with confirmation of the outcome of the session in writing. If the mediation is attempted but the other party does not participate, you will be given a letter advising you attempted to mediate.

This is an important step in the investigation process as if the matter progresses to Court, the Court will request to see proof of an attempt to mediate before proceeding.

## What can Council do?

Once an initial letter has been sent to the dog owner and mediation has been attempted through a Community Justice Centre, Council can proceed with an investigation.

In order to do this evidence needs to be collected. This includes:

- At least two independent complaints from two different addresses within a close vicinity to the barking dog (this verifies that more than one household is being affected);
- Each complainant is to record the dates, times and durations of the barking over the same 7 day period (on a form provided by Council);
- Council will contact other neighbours to seek input and assistance;
- Council officers will conduct random noise patrols.

# More Barking Dog Information....



## Possible Outcomes

The outcome available on conclusion of an investigation include:

- Insufficient evidence is obtained to substantiate nuisance barking and no further action is taken.
- If the barking dog can be identified and evidence confirms the nuisance barking is occurring a Nuisance Order can be issued on the dog. This is in place for 6 months and requires the dog own to take necessary action to modify the dogs behaviour and reduce the nuisance. A breach of the Nuisance Order can result in the dog owner receiving a fine.
- If the barking dog cannot be identified but the property the barking comes from is known a Prevention Notice can be served. This specifies conditions that must be complied with. Issuing a Prevention Notice requires strong evidence as it can be appealed by the dog owner. If the Prevention Notice proceeds and is breached, fines can be issued.
- You can also take your own action through the Local Court if you are not satisfied with the outcome of Council's investigation by seeking a Noise Abatement Order.

**Please note: Council cannot remove a dog from a premises due to barking**

## What if my dog is the barker?

Finding the cause of the barking is the first step to finding a solution.

If the barking is unexplained consider taking your dog to the vet as it may be unwell.

Ensure you provide your dog with physical comfort and mental stimulation. This includes suitable food, clean water, adequate space and shelter, exercise and stimulation.

Dogs are social animals and need to have quality interactions with their family every day. This can include going for a walk, doing some training, playing, grooming or just sitting and patting your dog.

Keeping your dog occupied to prevent nuisance behaviour can be difficult when you are not home. Finding out what your dog enjoys will help you to know what to provide them with for their environmental enrichment. It may be a chew toy or a ball, bones, blankets or ice blocks. There are lots of different items available to keep your dog stimulated and occupied when at home alone.

Attending training can help you find out what your dog likes and can help you try and resolve problem behaviours. It will also help socialise your dog with new people and other dogs. Dog trainers can provide excellent advice and tips to help your dog live a happy and healthy life. Positive reinforcement is a great way to teach your dog to display 'good' behaviour. This can be done by rewarding your dog with a treat (food, pats, a toy) when they display positive behaviours.

If there is a particular trigger that sets off your dog then a visual block can help to assist. Eg. If the postal delivery person or people walking past your property triggers your dog's barking then consider installing a visual barrier so the dog cannot see the mail being delivered or cannot see people walking by such a solid fencing, hedging, shade cloth etc.

For more information regarding reducing and controlling nuisance barking please contact a Ranger on 02 4677 1100.

## Citronella Collars

These collars deliver a spray of citronella into the dogs face when they bark. They can assist in reducing nuisance barking however Council recommends identifying the cause of the barking and implementing alternate methods such as providing stimulation and enrichment activities to keep your dog busy during lonely times or by using positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour prior to using a citronella collar.

## Useful Links

NSW Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au)

RSPCA  
[www.rspca.org.au](http://www.rspca.org.au)

Community Justice  
[www.cjc.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cjc.justice.nsw.gov.au)

Animal Welfare League  
[www.awlnsw.com.au](http://www.awlnsw.com.au)

Wollondilly Shire Council  
[www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au)  
62-64 Menangle Street, Picton  
02 4677 1100  
[council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@wollondilly.nsw.gov.au)

Date:

Dear Neighbour,

We/I wanted to let you know that your dog/s is displaying some nuisance barking within the neighbourhood.

Rather than making a complaint to Council, we wanted to take the opportunity to advise you of the situation so that you can try and rectify the problem.

1. Your dog barks during the \_\_\_\_\_ day / night / both
2. Barking continues for up to \_\_\_\_\_ minutes/hours at a time
3. The barking is worse when you are \_\_\_\_\_ Home / Not Home / Both
4. Your dogs appears to be barking at \_\_\_\_\_
5. The dog causing the nuisance is predominantly \_\_\_\_\_  
(if there is more than one dog)

By letting you know of my/our concerns I hope we can resolve this issue in a friendly manner.

Regards

Your neighbour