Barking Dogs

Barking Dog—How can Council help?

Dogs are an important part of our local community but dogs that bark excessively can become a source of irritation for neighbours and others using the local environment. Our best friend can, if it barks continually, become an intrusion and create friction between neighbours.

City of Burnside receives numerous complaints regarding nuisance noise from barking dogs. Approaching the dog’s owner in a neighbourly manner and discussing your concerns with them sometimes easily resolves this type of complaint.

The dog’s owner may not realise that the barking is causing an annoyance to other people.

- The dog may only bark excessively when the owner is not home.
- The owner may not hear the barking from various areas within the house.
- The owner may be a very sound sleeper and not woken when the dog barks.
Neighbourhood Communication

Neighbours can help each other to solve barking problems by communicating to each other their concerns and needs. Neighbours can assist by identifying the reasons for excessive barking and noting what is happening in the area when the dog is barking.

Don’t forget, the owner of the dog(s) may not know the animal is causing a nuisance.

Approaching the dog’s owner should be the first step when the problem arises and state your case clearly and politely. He or she may not be aware of the barking situation.

If the dog owner is unapproachable or you are not comfortable approaching them, try placing the ‘Dear Neighbour’ letter contained at the bottom of this document into their letterbox including ticking any tips and times that may help resolve the complaint.

If the neighbour takes no action or does not agree that a problem exists, please contact the City of Burnside and we can have preliminary discussions with the dog(s) owner.

In most cases the solution can be found by communication between neighbours and should be sought prior to lodging a complaint with your Council.

Preliminary Investigation

Should you be unable to resolve the barking via neighbour communication then Council will have preliminary discussions with the dog owner.

You can contact the Ranger Services on 8366 4239 and you will be provided with a reference number for your request. Please ensure you provide as much detail as possible about the nuisance barking, so the Ranger has sufficient information when having preliminary discussions with the dog owner.

Council has found that early intervention and communication from a Ranger can resolve the problem without the need for a formal investigation, which is a more desired outcome for all parties involved.

However should the barking not be resolved after preliminary discussions then Council will need to conduct a formal investigation. A complaint form is required and can be requested from Council in person or by telephone on 8366 4239.
Formal Investigation

On receipt of the complaint forms Council’s Ranger will:

- Study the complaint forms and 14 day diaries to establish barking in attempt to try to determine the reason for the dog’s barking;
- Confirm that other nominated residents are being affected by the dog’s barking by a survey;
- Advise the dog owner of the complaint, discuss possible solutions and inform them of their responsibilities.

If the Ranger believes there is a problem with the dog, the Ranger will work with the owner until they believe that the owner has done everything possible to help correct the barking behaviour.

What happens if the dog owner doesn’t cooperate?

If the dog owner refuses to co-operate the process becomes more formal.

Council has the power to expiate (fine) or serve a Barking dog order (a legal document) on the dog owner to take reasonable steps to abate the barking.

After this time Council may request that you and other affected neighbours complete further barking diaries. It is very important that you do so as this may be evidence produced in court.

If we do not receive all the diaries or if they are incomplete, Council may be unable to proceed further.

Legal Action

Legal action is only considered if all other efforts from Council have failed to resolve the barking.

Legal action is not automatic and depends on a legal assessment of each case and evidence provided. Should court action proceed you may be asked to appear as a witness.

If you do not wish to do so, Council may terminate its investigation.

It may also take time to obtain a hearing date at court, during this time you must keep an up to date record of the barking and the effect it has on you.

Civil Action

If investigations from Council do not determine a nuisance barking problem, this does not limit or negate your civil rights to seek relief. For further advice, you may wish to contact one of the following:

1. Your own solicitor
2. Southern Community Justice Service (Tel. 8384 5222)
   Legal Services Commission of South Australia (Tel. 1300 366 424)
Dear Neighbour,

You may not be aware but your dog is currently causing a noise nuisance in the neighbourhood by barking.

I have discussed this problem with the City of Burnside which has suggested that as a first step, I express my concern to you, to allow you the opportunity to rectify the situation.

On the back of this letter are some suggestions that may assist in resolving the problem.

Your co-operation at this stage is all that is needed.

Regards

Your Neighbour
Barking Dogs

Tips for owners of barking dogs

Barking is natural dog behaviour but it can become a problem if a dog barks excessively. Depending on why your dog is barking, you may need to:

- Take the dog on more frequent walks (once or twice daily) and include it on family outings. Even if you have a large yard, dogs still need to socialise and experience the sounds and smells of walks outside.

- Make the backyard environment more interesting. Hide food around your garden, provide games, sand pits full of buried toys and bones.

- Provide the dog with toys and a large raw marrow bone to chew. You can also stuff hollow (indestructible) toys with food. Ensure the dog has fresh water, a balanced diet, and adequate shelter from weather extremes. If possible, give the dog access to the house through a dog door.

- Take your dog to obedience classes. Practice what you learn regularly to provide mental stimulation for the dog.

- If the dog is barking at visitors or passers-by, block its view of movement outside the property with solid fencing, shade cloth or hedging (repair any gaps). Alternatively, if the source of provocation is a human (e.g. children teasing the dog), try to discuss the problem with them.

- Make sure your dog is in good health, by taking it to the vet for regular check ups.

- If your dog barks at night consider letting him sleep indoors.

Nuisance barking can be managed with training and consistency and with the help of a dog trainer. If your dog is barking excessively please contact the City of Burnside or alternatively the websites below provide information on trainers and obedience clubs.