

Nuisance Dog Complaints

What powers does the Council have to deal with my complaint?

The Central Coast Council administers the *Dog Control Act 2000* and the Central Coast Council's Dog Management Policy.

What is a nuisance dog?

Section 46(3) of the *Dog Control Act 2000* states a dog is a nuisance if:

- (a) it behaves in a manner that is injurious or dangerous to the health of any person; or
- (b) it creates a noise, by barking or otherwise, that persistently occurs or continues to such an extent that it unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in any premises or public place.

How do I complain about a nuisance dog?

Under Section 47(2) of the *Dog Control Act 2000*, a formal complaint must be submitted to the Council to facilitate investigation into the nuisance. This includes filling in the *Barking Dog Complaint Form* and filling in the *Barking Dog Record / Diary* over a two-week period.

Any submission of a *Barking Dog Complaint Form* requires the payment of a \$25.00 fee. This fee will be refunded if the complaint is substantiated.

Will the Council act on my complaint?

Yes. The matter will be referred to a Council Officer who will investigate the complaint. After speaking with you and reviewing the complaint the Officer will monitor the dog for a short time to gain an understanding of the possible causes of the nuisance. This information may assist the owner to manage the issue. The Council may also conduct a survey of households that may be affected by the nuisance.

Will the Council speak with the owner of the dog?

Yes. The Officer will speak with the owner of the dog and advise them that a complaint has been made about their dog. The Officer will provide the owner with an information pack detailing the resources available. The Officer may also advise the owner to abate the nuisance. In some cases an *Abatement Notice* will be issued requiring the owner to abate the nuisance. The abatement period may be from seven to 21 days.

Why have you not demanded the owner to stop the nuisance immediately?

If an *Abatement Notice* is issued it will allow the property owner reasonable time to abate, or remove, the nuisance. Often dog owners are unaware of the problem, particularly when the barking occurs when the owner is at work. Some dog owners employ the services of dog behaviour specialists to help with the nuisance and it may take some time to achieve a positive outcome. In some cases, there is a requirement for additional fencing or barriers to be built where the dog is sight stimulated.

What happens after the abatement period?

The Officer will be in contact with you shortly after the abatement period has expired to ascertain if the nuisance has been abated. If the nuisance has abated the owner will be notified. In the event that the nuisance has not abated the Council will monitor the dog at various times.

If there is sufficient evidence to prosecute the owner, then an *Infringement Notice* may be issued. A fine of 2 penalty units can be applied. The value of penalty units is set by the State Department of Justice each year.

The Council will continue to monitor the situation and may issue further infringement notices/court action where appropriate. It is important that the complainant notifies the Council of any reoccurrence of the nuisance.

Can the owner plead 'not guilty' to the Infringement Notice?

Yes. The matter is then put before the courts. You may be called as a witness in the matter.

Will the Council tell the owner my name? No. Your name and address will not be revealed to the owner unless the matter is prosecuted and is heard before the court. In this case you may be called as a witness and your details would be available to the defence.

Why can't the Council just impound the dog?

The Council has no power to impound a nuisance dog. An order can be made by a court under Section 49 of the *Dog Control Act 2000* for the dog to be removed from the property or destroyed. However, due to the excessive time that it takes for matters to be heard before the court, this is generally only used when all other actions have been exhausted.

Should I expect the nuisance to stop within the abatement period?

Generally, most owners take appropriate action within a very short period and the dog is no longer a nuisance. Often a dog owner is simply unaware of the nuisance and can take simple steps to abate the nuisance.

On occasions an owner of a nuisance dog may choose to do nothing or actually increase the level of nuisance. In this case the matter can become prolonged and may extend into many months if the case proceeds to court.



Barking Dog Complaint Form

This document and the *Barking Dog Record / Diary* form must be completed in full, signed and returned to the Central Coast Council within seven days of completion (please PRINT all details).

Complainant's Name:
(Your Name)

Address:
(Your Address)

Contact Phone: (H) (W) (M)
(Home) (Work) (Mobile)

Address of Offending Dog(s):

Description of Dog(s):
(Colour and Breed of Dog/s)

Have you verified where the barking is coming from? YES NO

Have you seen the dog/s barking? YES NO

Have you spoken to the dog/s owner/s about this problem? YES NO

Have you discussed this problem with your neighbours? YES NO

If YES, are they prepared to support your claim? YES NO

If YES, please supply their name and address and contact details below:

Witness Name:

Address:

Contact Phone:

Statement of Complaint

I, the undersigned, wish to lodge a formal complaint with the Central Coast Council in relation to the dog(s) described above which bark persistently to such a degree that it unreasonably interferes with my (peace), (comfort) or (convenience) in my premises. (Please strike out items not applicable in brackets).

Signature of Complainant: Date: / /

Privacy Statement: Completion of this form may require the disclosure of personal information. The intended recipients of this information are officers of the Central Coast Council in order to advance the purposes of this form and to carry out Council business. The *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the Council's *Privacy Policy* regulate the use of this information, which will not be disclosed to any other party, except with your permission or if required or authorised by law. You may make application to access or amend personal information held by the Council by contacting the Customer Service Desk on 6429 8900. Should you not provide the information sought, the Council will not be able to process this form.

Barking Dog Record / Diary

How to complete a barking dog diary

Your accuracy in recording the nuisance barking is of extreme importance as it may be presented as evidence in court.

Please create a detailed diary over a two-week period (see example indicated below) and attach the diary to the *Barking Dog Complaint Form*.

EXAMPLE

Date	Time Barking Started	Time Barking Stopped	Intermittent (I)* Continuous (C)*	Barking for how long?	Reasons for Barking (Person walking past, weather, another animal etc.)
01.07.2018	10.00am	11.50am	I	1 hr 50m	No apparent reason
01.07.2018	12.30pm	12.45pm	C	15m	Postal delivery
01.07.2018	5.00pm	7.00pm	I	2h	Owner arrived home
01.07.2018	7.30pm	7.40pm	C	10m	Cat in back yard
01.07.2018	10.30pm	1.00am	I	2h 30m	No apparent reason

* Intermittent – continual barking, start then stop.

* Continuous – continual, non-stop barking.

This may seem excessive, but remember, you may be required to present this diary before a magistrate as accurate and concise evidence.

I acknowledge that above Barking Dog Record / Diary is true and correct.

John Smith

Signed

Barking Dog Record / Diary

** Please photocopy this blank form if more entries are required to record barking. **

Date	Time Barking Started	Time Barking Stopped	Intermittent (I)* Continuous (C)*	Barking for how long?	Reasons for Barking (Person walking past, weather, another animal etc.)

* Intermittent – continual barking, start then stop.
 * Continuous – continual, non-stop barking.

I acknowledge that above Barking Dog Record / Diary is true and correct.

_____ Signed