

2016

Barking Dogs-What you and
Towong Shire can do.....



Barking Dogs

What you and Towong Shire can do

Why dogs bark

Dogs bark for many reasons, and even though they appear to be “barking for no reason” they are trying to communicate something.

The main reasons dogs bark are:

- Lack of exercise
- Inadequate yard space
- Boredom or lack of stimulation, both mental and physical
- Not enough human companionship
- Inadequate shelter from weather conditions
- Hunger or thirst
- Medical conditions such as an illness or discomfort
- Provocation
- Disturbances such as thunder, wind, unusual sounds
- Changes to family structure/separation anxiety that can lead to destructiveness, howling or escaping
- Movement outside the dog’s property

Dogs also bark to alert their owners of trouble, such as someone entering the property or perhaps a fire. Remember, a dog’s idea of an “intruder” may differ to that of the owner. It could include cats, possums, other dogs, or even birds flying across the property.

While it is acceptable for a dog to bark to warn its owner of an intruder, it is the owner’s responsibility to train the dog not to bark at “normal” occurrences such as possums, cats and birds.

What can I do?

Approach your neighbour - Council’s expectation is that you attempt to contact the dog owner advising them their dog is causing you a nuisance by barking.

Consider approaching your neighbour, either in person or by sending them a letter. More often than not, the problem can be resolved if you approach the owner of the dog and explain the effects of the dog barking.

Sometimes, 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 some areas in their house.
- The owner may be a very sound sleeper and has not woken when the dog barks.

A sample letter is available to help you if you are not comfortable approaching them in person. There is also a page of hints on how to stop the dog barking and some useful contacts that you can give to the dog’s owner.



Make a complaint to Council

You can make a formal complaint to Council. You need to:

- have advised the dog owner of the nuisance
- identify the address where the dog resides and a description of the offending dog/s
- Provide information requested by the Council Officer.

What Council can do once a complaint is made

When Council receives a complaint, an Animal Management Officer will contact you to discuss the issue, what can be done and what you need to do.

It is important that the complainant assists Council by working with the Officer to demonstrate the impact of the barking behavior.

You may be required to keep a diary of the barking and may also be required to be a witness in Court if the issue cannot be resolved.

If there is a problem, an Animal Management Officer will discuss possible solutions with the dog's owner, and may issue a Notice to comply if necessary.

If no action is taken by the dog's owner, and reconciliation attempts fail, Council can apply for a Court Order. You will then be required to go to Court as a witness and give evidence.

Council may consider taking the matter to court only if:

- The dog owner/keeper has not complied with the Notice to Comply.

- All avenues for reconciliation/resolution of the problems are exhausted
- The person making the complaint agrees to give evidence in Court.



How can I stop my dog from barking?

- Make sure that you do not reward your dog for barking too much. Don't let the dog inside or give it attention when it barks. Instead, give the dog attention when it is quiet.
- If the dog is barking at people or noises on the other side of a fence, move the dog to another part of the yard, or put up a barrier to keep the dog away from that area.
- If the dog barks at regular disturbances such as children walking to school or rubbish trucks, keep the dog inside or in an enclosed area at these times.
- Ensure that the dog has adequate exercise, is not bored and has play time with you.
- If the dog races along a path or fence barking at passing distractions, put barriers or obstacles in the dog's way to slow it down.
- Make sure that the dog has food, water and shelter from the weather.

- If the dog is barking at people it can see passing by, try blocking the dog's view.
- Teach the dog to stop barking on command. When the dog is barking give firm commands such as 'cease' and call the dog to you. Praise the dog when it stops barking.
- Attend accredited dog obedience training.

Dog obedience

To get your dog into good habits it is recommended that you enrol your dog in a dog obedience club. Qualified instructors will teach owners how to walk their dogs on a loose lead, and sit, stand and drop on command.

This is generally followed by expanded exercises to include stay, recall and stand for examination. Socialisation with other dogs and people is important and this is heavily emphasised.

As the dogs and handlers progress through the classes the exercises are refined so that eventually the dogs respond to their handler's commands whether on or off lead.



Dog obedience and regular training can provide mental and physical stimulation and help prevent 'boredom' barking.

Useful contacts

- RSPCA 9224 2222
www.rspcavic.org
- Brydie Charlesworth Dog Training
(02) 6024 5073
- Victorian Government's Responsible Pet Ownership program
136 186
www.pets.info.vic.gov.au
- Dispute Settlement Centre Victoria
4th Floor 456 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne 3000
T: 039603 8370
Email: dscv@justice.vic.gov.au



An example of a "Dear Neighbour" letter is on the next page for your convenience.

Date:

Dear Neighbour

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

Towong Shire Council has suggested that as a first step, I express my concern to you, to give you the opportunity to rectify the situation.

Enclosed with this letter is some information that may help you to resolve the problem.

Your cooperation at this stage would be appreciated to avoid this matter progressing any further.

Regards

Your neighbour.

Your dog appears to bark at the following times:

For the following reason(s):

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Barking Dog Diary

To ensure that information on the barking or nuisance dog/s is/are recorded, the following forms should be filled out. The diary needs to be kept over a continuous fourteen (14) day period.

Continue to complete a Barking Diary whilst this complaint is being investigated.

Barking Dog Diary – This record is to be filled out and maintained over a fourteen (14) day period by *each* person who has made the complaint.

Completing the Diary

The date of each instance is to be recorded.

Time Barking, From and To

The time that the barking started and ceased is to be recorded.

Cause of Barking

When the dog is heard barking, check to see if there is any identifiable cause, ie:

- the postman going past
- children teasing the dog

Effect of Barking

It is also a requirement that the effect that the barking is having on you is recorded.

This needs to be specific, for example:

- woke me up
- prevented my studying

It is not sufficient to state generalisations or 'as above'.

Great care is to be observed in compiling this record. The information that you provide may be used in court should this action become necessary.

Continue to fill in the barking diaries while this complaint is being investigated.



Barking Dog Diary

Date	<i>Time Barking Started</i>	<i>Time Barking Stopped</i>	<i>Reason For Barking:</i> <i>(Person walking past, thunder, another animal, traffic, etc)</i>	<i>Noise:</i> <i>How does the noise affect you? (can't sleep, can't go outside, windows & doors shut)</i>

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Barking Dog Complaint Form

This form and the Barking Dog diary must be completed in full, signed and returned within 7 days of completion (please PRINT all details)

Return to: Local Laws Officer, Towong Shire Council, PO Box 55, Tallangatta Vic 3700
info@towong.vic.gov.au

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Contact Details: Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Email: _____

Address of offending dog/s: _____

Description of Dog/s: _____

(Colour and Breed of dog/s, if known)

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 about this problem? Yes No

I, the undersigned, wish to lodge a formal complaint with Towong Shire Council in relation to the dog(s) described above that bark persistently to such a degree that is unreasonably interferes with the quiet enjoyment of my home.

Signature of complainant: _____

Date: ____/____/20____

Your Privacy:

Towong Shire Council Is collecting the personal information on this form for the purpose of gathering Information applicable to this complaint. The information will be used for investigating the complaint and will not be disclosed to any other party except as required by law. If you fail to provide the information, no action can be taken in regard to this complaint