

Noise Restrictions and Complaints



Environmental Protection Act 1994

What is Noise Pollution

Neighbourhood noise can sometimes become annoying and negatively affect health and wellbeing. As well as hearing loss, excessive or continuous noise may cause anxiety, stress, high blood pressure, sleep deprivation, distraction, lost productivity, and a general reduction in the quality of life.

When investigating a noise complaint, Council will consider:

- loudness of the noise
- frequency (whether it has a fluctuating, intermittent, tonal or impulsive nature)
- vibration components
- time and place
- duration
- source of the sound.

Most people wouldn't be bothered by a 21-gun salute on a special occasion but the loudness of a neighbour's air conditioner may be a major source of stress.

The *Environmental Protection Act 1994* specifies restrictions on the times noise can be made.

Noise Pollution Regulated by Council

Townsville City Council regulates residential and commercial noise nuisances including:

- building works
- air conditioning units
- pumps
- amplifiers
- indoor venues / outdoor events
- boat motors
- pool pumps and spas
- refrigeration equipment
- regulated devices (mowers, power tools, leaf blowers, compressors, impacting tools, mulchers, etc.).

If Council receives a noise complaint, a Council Officer will check to see if the noise is meeting the restrictions as summarised below. You may be required to keep a noise diary of when you hear the noise and how it affects your well-being.

Usually, the noise nuisance is compared to the usual background noise level, and the restriction is on the increase in decibels above the background level.

Background level

Most communities have adapted to the everyday noises (traffic, birds) of their surroundings. They come to be accepted as reasonable and do not interfere with our quality of life. This general noise is called background level.

Decibel

Decibel (dB) is the unit that sound levels are measured in. The ear can detect a one decibel change, but generally we can reliably notice a change of two or three decibels.

See below for examples of specific restrictions.

Air conditioners/refrigeration equipment

- 7am – 10pm: noise no louder than 5 dB above background level.
- 10pm and after: no noise of more than 3 dB above background level.

Amplifier devices

You must not use or allow to use these:

- on a business day from 7am – 10pm or any other day between 8am – 6pm, if the noise is more than 10 dB above background level; or
- before 7am or after 10pm on a business day,
- before 8am or after 6pm on any other day.

Power Boats at a Property

You must not use or allow to use these:

- on a Sunday or public holiday before 8am or after 6:30pm
- on a Saturday or business day before 7am or after 7pm.

Pumps (including spa and pool pumps)

You must not use or allow to use these:

- before 7am or after 10pm on any day, if the noise is audible
- from 7am – 7pm on any day, if the noise is more than 5 dB above background level
- from 7pm – 10pm on any day, if the noise is more than 3 dB above background level.

Regulated Devices (lawn mower/power tools etc.)

You must not operate a regulated device in a way that makes audible noise:

- on a Sunday or public holiday, before 8am or after 7pm
- on a Saturday or business day, before 7am or after 7pm.

Building Works

You must not make audible noise from the building works:

- on a Sunday or public holiday, at any time
- on a Saturday or business day, before 6:30am or after 6:30pm.

Indoor Venues

(a building being used for musical, sporting or other entertainment or for cultural or religious activities)

You must not use or allow to use indoor venues:

- before 7am on any day if the use makes an audible noise
- from 7am to 10pm on any day if the use makes a noise of more than 5 dB above background level
- from 10pm to midnight, if the use makes a noise of more than 3 dB above background level.

Open Air Events

Open air events are restricted:

- before 7am on any day if the use causes audible noise
- from 7am – 10pm on any day if the use causes noise more than 70 dB
- from 10pm – midnight, if the use causes noise of more than the lesser of 50 dB or 10 dB above the background level.

Noise Issues Not Dealt with by Council

- Noise complaints about music, off-road vehicles and burglar alarms – contact the Queensland Police Service.
- Noise from liquor licensed premises contact the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation.
- Safety/transport noise, government activities and public infrastructure (i.e. maintenance of roads) are exempt under the Act.

Reducing Noise in our Community

When taking on a project that has the possibility of creating noise likely to disturb your neighbours take the time to talk to them first before you begin. Find out what concerns they may have and ask them for suggestions about solving any problems. In many cases an agreement can be reached that satisfies everyone's needs.

Select a quieter alternative

When buying equipment or appliances, consider the noise level and, where possible, purchase the quietest option available.

Location

Where practical, locate noisy appliances as far away as possible from neighbours (especially away from sensitive areas like bedrooms). Avoid placing noisy equipment near noise reflective surfaces like walls or fences (especially corners) and use noise absorbing features (such as plants or baffles) to hide the equipment and reduce noise output.

Work (especially when using power tools) as far away as possible from neighbours if it's likely to be noisy. Remember that avoiding 'line of sight' between noisy equipment and other people will reduce the noise they hear.

More Information

For more information visit Council's website townsville.qld.gov.au, or call Council's Customer Service Centre on **13 48 10**.

Who addresses which Noise Complaints?

Noise Type	Authority	Contact
Power tools and other regulated devices, air conditioners, pool and spa pumps		
Residential and commercial land	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Animal Noise		
Domestic animals	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Commercial boarding kennels	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Wild or native animals	Department of Environment and Science	13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Amplified/Musical Noise		
Musical noise, parties, rowdy behaviour	Queensland Police Service	131 444
Concert/event noise	Townsville City Council - After Hours	13 48 10
Megaphones or public address systems	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Burglar alarms	Queensland Police Service	131 444
Liquor Licensed Premises Noise		
All noise issues involving licensed premises	Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation	13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Aircraft Noise		
All noise associated with aircraft	Airservices Australia	1800 802 584
Building Work		
Residential and commercial land	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Vehicles/Motor Bike Noise		
Noisy vehicles	Department of Transport and Main Roads	13 23 80
On private land	Queensland Police Service	131 444
Traffic on major arterial roads	Department of Transport and Main Roads	13 23 80
Traffic on minor roads	Townsville City Council	13 48 10
Race tracks	Townsville City Council	13 48 10