

Noise from Pumps and Air Conditioners

Pumps and air conditioners are one source of noise that Council frequently receives complaints about. Complaints about pumps and air conditioners are difficult for Council to resolve because:

- each individual will have a different view as to what is a noise nuisance - this will vary as a result of things like the location, type of noise and whether the equipment is a new noise.
- it can be costly to move or sound proof equipment retrospectively
- the noise may not be a problem on the source property itself
- Council may need to investigate to ascertain whether the noise levels are above the requirements.

Being a good neighbour

There are things that can be done to reduce any potential problems.

Select a quieter alternative

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

Location

Locate air conditioners and pumps as far away as possible from neighbours. Avoid placing noisy equipment near surfaces that might reflect noise like walls or fences.

Sound proofing enclosures

Enclosures or sound proofed covers can help in reducing the noise. Other buffers could include fences, vegetation or additional sound-reducing barriers.

Time of use and other requirements

Some equipment and activities have specific requirements, such as the times noise can be made or where the equipment should be placed. These are outlined below.

Residential air conditioners

The *SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008* states that air conditioners must be located more than 45cm from a boundary. In addition, between 10pm and 7am weekdays and 10pm and 8am on weekends and public holidays, noise should not be audible in a habitable room of a neighbouring residence.

From 7am and 10pm on weekdays and 8am and 10pm on weekends and public holidays, noise from air conditioners should not exceed the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) when measured at any property boundary.

Swimming Pool Pumps

Under the *SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008*, for swimming pool pumps to be exempt development they must be housed in an enclosure that is sound proofed. Between 8pm and 7am weekdays and 8pm and 8am on weekends and public holidays, noise from swimming pool pumps should not be audible in a habitable room of a neighbouring residence.

Heat Pumps

Under the *SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008*, between 10pm and 7am weekdays and 10pm and 8am on weekends and public holidays, noise from heat pumps water heaters should not be audible in a habitable room of a neighbouring residence. At other times heat pump water heaters should not exceed the background noise level by more than 5dB(A) when measured at any property boundary.

What can I do if the noise is causing a problem?

1. Discuss

It is recommended that residents takes steps to let the person making the noise know that there is a problem. The person may not be aware of the issue and will take steps to fix the issue once they know.

2. Wait

Give the person some time to make changes or take some action.

3. Lodge a complaint with council

Where this does not solve the problem, a complaint can be lodged with Council using the form on Council's website. Forms need to be complete and give as much detail as possible.

Council may also provide information on Community Justice Centre (CJC). The CJC is government-funded but independent centres that specialise in settling differences between neighbours through a mediation process. This is where you meet with the people who are making the noise, together with a CJC representative to try and solve the problem. This process will not cost any money and has a high success rate.

Where the complaint is not resolved in this first stage, Council may undertake a site visit to verify the details and discuss the process for further investigation. A noise diary kept for a minimum of seven days will be required. It is important that as much detail as possible is included in the noise diary. Accuracy in recording the noise is extremely important as it may be presented as evidence in Court.