

# Managing Barking in Our Community



## A GUIDE TO WHY DOGS BARK AND HOW TO CONTROL IT

### All dogs bark!

Barking is an extremely common dog behaviour problem and the most common community problem reported to Council. Having barking dogs in the community significantly reduces the quality of life for those affected by the barking.

Barking is a problem if a dog barks:

- When left alone for extended periods of time;
- Immediately after you leave home;
- When people enter or pass your property;
- When neighbourhood disturbances occur;
- When seeking attention.

You know you have a problem when:

- Your neighbours tell you;
- A complaint is received by Council;
- It annoys you!

### Why do dogs bark?

Dogs bark to communicate. So, what is your dog trying to tell you? If you wish to reduce your dog's barking you need to understand why he or she is barking.

Sometimes dogs bark because they are rewarded for barking. When their owner shouts at them to "shut up", the postman goes away, someone throws a ball for them etc. Barking can also reduce a dog's stress levels and boredom.

For more information call 1300 005 872 or visit [www.lockyervalley.qld.gov.au](http://www.lockyervalley.qld.gov.au)

## What prompts a dog to bark?

- **Boredom** - being alone with very little to do for extended periods of time can lead to boredom, frustration and loneliness for dogs. Bored dogs often also show anti-social behaviours, like trying to escape, being destructive, chewing and digging.
- **Anxiety** - when dogs are left alone they may fret and become anxious, often barking for extended periods of time. When dogs bark because of fear or anxiety, it is very important to work on reducing anxiety levels as early as possible.
- **Disturbances** - barking episodes can be set off when people come to the door or walk past your property (like the postman).
- **Discomfort** - Dogs left chained or tied- up may find it difficult to get exercise or water to drink. If your dog is usually quiet dog and suddenly starts to bark excessively, check its environment and take a trip to the vet.
- **Excitement** - anticipating a walk, playing games, playing with children, seeing people in swimming pools and hearing owners arrive home often excites a dog. This is uncontrolled barking and can be fixed by removing the source of excitement or not rewarding the barking behaviour.

## What can you do?

If you are unsure why your dog is barking, take the time to determine the following:

- Time of day - does your dog bark at certain times of the day? What is happening in your neighbourhood at that time? Is the postman delivering mail? Is the rubbish being collected? Are children coming home from school and walking past your property? Are straying cats or possums in your yard at night?
- What are you doing? - does your dog start barking after you leave to go to work? Are you away for extended periods of time, resulting in your dog's boredom? Are you rewarding the unwanted barking behaviour by reacting to it?
- What is your dog doing? - is he stressed or excited? Is he bored or lonely?

## Assess your problem

- What makes your dog bark?
- Look at the length of time this behaviour has been going on. Has it been gradual or is it occasional or progressive?
- When, where and why does my dog bark (day/night), when I'm not home?
- What happens after my dog barks? Does there appear to be any form of stress relief for my dog?

## Options to Prevent Barking

There are many options for your consideration to abate the noise nuisance created from you dog(s), which include but is not limited to:

- Discuss the matter with a veterinarian;
- Seek professional advice or training from companies/organisations or veterinary/professional animal behaviourist that work with owners of barking dogs to alleviate the problem;
- The use of anti-barking collars; and
- Screening such as solid fences to limit or remove the sense of excitement and/or territorial behaviour.