

# Fact Sheet – Barking Dog Information for the Dog Owner



MORNINGTON  
PENINSULA  
Shire

Dogs are an important part of our community, but dogs that bark excessively can become a nuisance and create friction between neighbours and others in the area.

Mornington Peninsula Shire Council receives numerous complaints regarding noise from barking dogs.

## Why dogs bark

Even though dogs may appear to be “barking for no reason” they are in fact trying to communicate something to their owner, or anyone who is willing to pay attention.

### You may not realise that your dog’s barking is causing a nuisance to other people

- The dog may only bark excessively when you are not home.
- You may not hear the barking from certain areas in your house.
- You may be a very sound sleeper and not woken when the dog barks.

### The list below provides some of the main reason why dogs bark

- Lack of exercise
- Disturbances
- Not enough human companionship
- Movement outside the dog’s property
- Hungry or thirsty
- Medical condition
- Inadequate yard space
- Provocation
- Boredom
- Behaviour problems
- Change to family structure
- Inadequate shelter from weather conditions

Dogs also bark to alert their owners of trouble, such as an intruder entering the property or perhaps a fire. Remember, a dog’s idea of an intruder may differ from 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 trouble, it is the owner’s responsibility to train the dog not to bark at “normal” occurrences such as possums, cats or birds.

Excessive barking at normal movement/noises from adjoining properties is unacceptable behaviour.

## Some simple tips for reducing barking

- Behavioural problems can be understood if you learn more about your dog’s behaviour. Barking can be controlled through several small behavioural changes, some as small as walking your dog twice a day to relieve boredom.
- Consult your local veterinarian, dog obedience club or animal behaviourist for advice on the best approach for your situation. 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.
- 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.
- Ensure that the dog has adequate exercise and obedience training.
- If the dog is being left alone for long periods of time, ensure you leave toys, bones etc. to provide stimulation.
- Make sure that the dog has food, water and shelter from the weather.
- If the dog is barking through gaps and cracks in the fence, fill them in.
- 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 such as “cease” and call the dog to you. Praise the dog when it stops barking. If the dog will not listen to you, it will need obedience training.

# Fact Sheet – Barking Dog Information for the Dog Owner



MORNINGTON  
PENINSULA  
Shire

## The Law in Victoria about barking dogs

- The *Domestic Animals Act 1994 (the Act)* regulates barking dogs if it creates a nuisance.
- The Act makes it an offence to allow a dog to be a nuisance if it injures or endangers the health of any person, or by persistently or continually barking to such a degree that it unreasonably interferes with the peace and comfort of another person in any other premises.
- To be a nuisance, the level of interference caused by the dog barking must be more than irritating or annoying or inconvenient.
- The Courts may grant an Abatement Order, which may result in removing the dog if the nuisance persists.

## Council's role

Council has a statutory obligation under the Act to investigate nuisances caused by barking dogs when a complaint is made.

## Council action

When Council receives a complaint alleging that your dog's barking may cause a nuisance, we must investigate the matter. Council will appoint a Community Safety Officer who will:

- engage with the complainant and gather evidence to substantiate the complaint.
- advise you of the complaint, discuss possible solutions and inform you of your responsibilities.
- direct you to abate the nuisance and provide advice on ways to manage the barking.
- update you throughout the investigation.

If the investigation confirms that a nuisance continues to exist and that an offence has occurred, Council may take enforcement action against you, which may include issuing of a formal direction, formal warning, an infringement notice or referring the matter to the Magistrates' Court.

Only the Courts have the power to make an Abatement Order to remove your dog after the offence has been proven.

## When Council will not take action

- If a Community Safety Officer determines that the barking is not a nuisance, the matter will be closed.
- Council will not get involved in any domestic dispute between you and your neighbour. If this happens, Council may inform both parties to take their own civil legal action.

## Other options to abate the noise

The **Dispute Settlement Centre** provides free advice to help neighbours sort out problems such as barking dogs.

They can be contacted at:  
The Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria  
4th Floor, 456 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

 1300 372 888

 [disputes.vic.gov.au](https://disputes.vic.gov.au)

**Civil Nuisance Action**, where the Civil Court would determine whether, on the balance of probabilities, the noise is affecting the use and enjoyment of land. You must speak to your lawyer for advice about this option.

Myth: It is natural for dogs to bark a lot. **False!**

Barking is one of the main ways in which dogs communicate.

However, it is not normal for a dog to bark at every noise or passer-by, nor to bark for long periods of time.