



# Air Conditioners

**Don't be a nuisance - be a good neighbour!**

Complaints that arise from the use of air conditioners are difficult to mediate. To reduce the likelihood of receiving a complaint about your air conditioner, a little prior planning and forethought could go a long way to avoiding future potential problems.

After installing an air conditioner many people find that the noise from it annoys their neighbours. Noise can disturb sleep, interfere with listening to the television, talking and can have an adverse effect on people's health

## Legal background

The Protection of Environment and Operations Act 1997 places restrictions on the amount of noise air conditioners can make. Gosford City Council is legally required to enforce these restrictions.

If Council receives a complaint about air conditioning noise, Council's Environmental Health Officers will investigate the complaint. If there is a breach of the legislation then an on-the-spot fine may be issued (\$200).

An occupier must not use air conditioning equipment between:

- 10 pm to 7 am on weekdays
- 10 pm to 8 am on weekends and public holidays.

## Before buying an air conditioner

Always check the sound pressure level label on the air conditioner you intend to buy. The lower the decibel (dB) rating the quieter your air conditioner. Generally split system air conditioners are quieter than room air conditioners.

A room air conditioner's mounting may also increase the amount of noise that your neighbour is subjected to.

If you are building a new home or renovating think about insulation to reduce the heat load on the air conditioner. This may mean you can choose a smaller capacity air conditioner, which may be quieter.

## Position

Finding the right position for your air conditioner is one of the most important decisions. If you place the unit close to your neighbour's house, especially the bedroom, it is likely to create more of a nuisance. For example, when houses are built close together the noise is trapped between the walls and eaves and can become louder. Try placing the air conditioner on the rear wall facing the backyard or on a wall that faces the street.

If the air conditioner must be situated near a neighbour's house then consider constructing some kind of barrier. A solid fence may create a suitable noise barrier. Split systems should be mounted on rubber blocks to reduce the vibration component.

## Enclosing

Acoustic enclosures can be custom built to reduce the noise emitted from an air conditioner. It is important that the enclosure has adequate ventilation. So that you do not void your warranty ensure that the enclosure is built to the manufacturers specifications. Enclosures can be expensive so you would be wise to seek a written guarantee from the installer on the expected reduction in the noise level.

## Maintenance

Correct maintenance will keep the air conditioner running quietly (check with the supplier on the recommended maintenance frequency). With age you should expect the noise output to increase. In some cases modifications can be made to the unit to decrease the noise output.

**For further information, please contact Council's Environmental Health Officers on 4325 8222 during business hours.**