Why do dogs bark?

All dogs bark - it’s natural. It’s the way they communicate with us and other animals.

Dogs may bark because they are:
- anxious or frightened
- bored
- confined to a small room
- hot or cold
- hungry or thirsty
- in need of exercise
- lonely
- seeking attention
- sick or injured
- suffering separation anxiety
- threatened or protecting their territory

What is nuisance barking?

Nuisance barking regularly interrupts lifestyle and amenity and is not controlled within a reasonable period of time. Barking must be in excess of what would be reasonably expected under normal circumstances.

Is your dog barking too much?

You may not even be aware that your dog is barking excessively, especially if you are away from home a considerable amount of time.

A neighbour may approach you regarding the noise your dog is making. The first step is to remain calm and keep an open mind. Ask your neighbour to record the time when your dog is barking and for how long.

Think about ways to identify why your dog may be barking when you are not home.

These could include:
- keeping barking dog records when you are at home
- asking your neighbour to keep barking dog records for you as well
- asking other neighbours if they have noticed excessive barking
- trying a ‘set up’ by pretending you are leaving home. Follow your normal routine when leaving home, park your car down the street and quietly walk home. Listen from outside your property to see if your dog starts barking
Handy tips to help reduce problem and nuisance barking

There are a number of ways to reduce problem barking.

These will require you to work with your dog.

How often do you exercise your dog?

Daily walking, especially before you leave in the morning, can reduce problem barking. A tired dog will not bark when it is resting or sleeping. Try doing training activities such as sit or drop at regular intervals during your walk. This will exercise your dog’s mind, increase obedience and further tire the dog.

Is your dog barking at passers by?

Is it possible to confine your dog to the backyard so it can’t see the passers by? Could you erect a sightscreen to remove the barking triggers? A sightscreen can be as simple as attaching opaque material (eg black plastic) to your fence.

Is your dog bored?

A chew toy, such as a KONG containing food, given to your dog just before you leave home in the morning will have your dog spending ages extricating its breakfast. If your dog is busy doing this, it won’t be barking, digging or chewing. Other options may include leaving your dog in a comfortable single room such as the laundry, with their chew toy and a radio on in the next room.

If you don’t know why or when your dog is barking

Council has a number of ways to assist you to help identify and reduce the problem. There are also a number of professionals who may be able to assist you with the problem.

Reputable dog trainers can be found on the Association of Pet Dog Trainers website, www.apdt.com.au

The most important thing to remember is that YOU need to work with council, be involved with your dog and your trainer and work towards resolving problem barking.