

# Noise management for outdoor events

Updated May 2011

*EPA 888/11: This information is for managers of outdoor events to assist them in complying with the Environment Protection Act 1993, by minimising the impact of noise on surrounding areas and. In this context, outdoor events are events which use public address or audio systems for announcements, music or other noise.*

## Introduction

The general environmental duty in section 25 of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (EP Act) states that:

A person must not undertake an activity that pollutes, or might pollute, the environment unless the person takes all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise any resulting environmental harm<sup>1</sup>.

The *Environment Protection (Noise) Policy 2007*<sup>2</sup> or Noise Policy provides a legal framework for the assessment of a wide range of often complex noise issues. It came into effect on 31 March 2008.

The technical document, *Guidelines for use of the Environment Protection (Noise) Policy 2007*, was developed for use by acoustic engineers and government officers, and is intended to be read in conjunction with the Noise Policy.

## How this applies to events

In order to demonstrate compliance with section 25 of the EP Act, event organisers and managers should consider the potential noise impacts of planned events and minimise those impacts where possible.

Suggested issues for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- the hours of operation of the planned event
- the location of potentially noise-affected premises<sup>3</sup> and predicted noise levels at those locations
- the planned location and orientation of stages, public address or audio systems
- reducing the level of noise throughout the duration of the event, particularly in the lower sound frequencies to prevent the sound penetrating houses if the planned event occurs at night<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental harm also includes nuisance, such as noise.

<sup>2</sup> [www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental\\_info/noise/environment\\_protection\\_noise\\_policy](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/environmental_info/noise/environment_protection_noise_policy)

<sup>3</sup> Noise Policy, cl 12: where noise is audible and the premises:  
(a) are in a separate occupation from the noise source and is used for residential or business purposes; or  
(b) constitute a quiet ambient environment set aside as a park or reserve or for public recreation or enjoyment.

<sup>4</sup> Noise Policy, cl 5(2)(b): between 10 pm and 7 am on the following day.

## Action required

A **noise management plan** for the event should be developed in conjunction with an acoustic engineer to identify potential impacts and measures to reduce those effects.

To assist in demonstrating that all reasonable and practicable measures have been taken to minimise environmental harm from occurring, the following actions should be included in a noise management plan:

- 1 A site plan including the location of the event, neighbouring land-use details, location and orientation of stages and public address or audio systems.
- 2 The distribution of a notification letter to surrounding potentially noise-affected premises used for residential or business purposes which includes:
  - a small version of the site plan
  - a description of the planned event
  - the time the event starts and finishes
  - the times for any sound testing to take place
  - a description of the proposed measures that will be implemented to minimise noise from the event
  - if your event has occurred previously, the changes you might have made to further minimise noise from the event
  - the name and phone number of a site contact person for any complaints lodged before, during and/or after the event.

This letter should be distributed to all potentially affected parties at least one week prior to the event. Please be aware that letter-box drops have the potential to not reach all intended recipients, partly due to delivery staff being unwilling to deliver this information to letterboxes marked with 'no junk mail' stickers. The preferred method for delivery is in an addressed envelope marked 'to the resident' or 'to the occupier'.

- 3 Undertake acoustic monitoring during the event to ensure that all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to minimise the overall sound level and low frequency noise at noise-affected premises.
- 4 Maintain a complaints register which should include:
  - contact details of all complainants
  - the time and date the complaint is received
  - a description of the complaint
  - a description of the activities occurring which gave rise to the complaint
  - any action taken as a result of the complaint.

## EPA involvement

The EPA may attend an event to take noise measurements in the surrounding area. It may also require entry to the site at any time during the event in order to carry out noise monitoring, particularly if a number of complaints about actual or potential noise have been received. The EPA may also require a copy of the complaints register either during or following an event in order to assess the information gathered and any action taken as a result of a complaint.

EPA authorised officers may approach event organisers to take action to reduce noise levels should the EPA consider that noise levels at a noise-affected premises is unreasonable, and/or that all reasonable and practicable measures have

not been taken to minimise the potential noise impact. The EP Act provides authorised officers with various regulatory tools to apply in such circumstances<sup>5</sup>.

## Further information and links

The Adelaide City Council (ACC) has developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) for noise mitigation from events held in their council area. The document sets out the general requirements that music-related events will need to address in order to gain permission to hold an event in an ACC venue.

The EPA advises that compliance with the requirements set out in the SOP may assist in demonstrating compliance with section 25 of the EP Act. A copy of the SOP can be found via the ACC website<sup>6</sup>.

The EPA encourages other councils to adopt a similar approach to the ACC SOP for the management of outdoor event noise in their areas.

## Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

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## Further information

### *Legislation*

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: <[www.legislation.sa.gov.au](http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au)>

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet	Telephone:	13 23 24
Adelaide Service SA Centre	Facsimile:	(08) 8204 1909
108 North Terrace	Website:	< <a href="http://shop.service.sa.gov.au">shop.service.sa.gov.au</a> >
Adelaide SA 5000		

### *For general information please contact:*

Environment Protection Authority	Telephone:	(08) 8204 2004
GPO Box 2607	Facsimile:	(08) 8124 4670
Adelaide SA 5001	Freecall (country):	1800 623 445
	Website:	< <a href="http://www.epa.sa.gov.au">www.epa.sa.gov.au</a> >
	Email:	< <a href="mailto:epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au">epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au</a> >

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<sup>5</sup> For further information on the regulatory tools available to the EPA, please refer to EPA Publication, *Compliance and enforcement: Regulatory options and tools* (2009).

<sup>6</sup> <[www.cityofadelaide.com.au/adccbrandwr/\\_assets/main/lib60090/park\\_lands\\_noise\\_mitigation\\_procedures.pdf](http://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/adccbrandwr/_assets/main/lib60090/park_lands_noise_mitigation_procedures.pdf)>