

Open Air Events

Open air events are defined as open-air competition, concert, display, race or other activity. The use of an amplifier device is used at most of these events. Noise from amplifier devices can disturb neighbours, disrupt their sleep and interfere with their normal daily activities (listening to the TV, talking on the telephone).

This is described as having an impact on an environmental value and is defined in the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* as; “a quality of physical characteristic of the environment that is conducive to ecological health of public amenity or safety; or another quality of the environment identified and declared to be an environmental value under an environmental protection policy or regulation.” If these types of environmental nuisances occur loud enough, it can impact on people’s health and general wellbeing.

The Law

The *Environmental Protection Act 1994* introduced by the State Government include noise limits for open air events. Council is legally required to enforce these limits. If issues cannot be resolved and further complaints are made, Council will have to investigate. If an amplifier device exceeds noise limits, Council may issue the responsible person or organisation with an on-the-spot fine or direction notice.

Consider noise impact on nearby residential properties

Organisers of events should take the time to talk to nearby residents. Find out what concerns they may have and ask them for suggestions about solving any problems. Discuss noise concerns with neighbours in the planning stages of the event. In many cases an agreement can be reached that satisfies the needs of everyone.

Allowable Noise Limits

Section 440X states the following: “An occupier of premises must not use, or permit the use of, the premises for an open-air event on any day-

- before 7a.m. if the use causes audible noise; or
- from 7a.m. to 10p.m, if the use causes noise of more the 70dB(A); or
- from 10p.m. to midnight, if the use causes noise of more than the lesser of the following- 50dB(A); 10dB(A) above the background level.”

The following exemptions apply:

1. If the venue is a licence premises under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, and
2. The premise is or is part of an educational institution, and
3. The use of the premises for the open-air event is organised by or for the educational institution for non-commercial purposes of the institution.

Ways to reduce noise

A range of measures can be used to reduce the noise impact of an amplifier device. These include:

- a) Limiting hours
Talk to neighbours to find out if there are particular times when the noise disturbs them. Most people are often concerned about operation at night or early morning when they are trying to sleep.
- b) Location
Locating amplifier devices as far as possible from neighbours and point away from sensitive areas to reduce their noise impact. Elevated speakers must be pointed down.
- c) Fences or Barriers
A solid fence/barrier may help to reduce noise levels. This won't be as effective if the fence has gaps.

Below is a practical guide to different decibel levels:

- Quiet room in the house 20-30 dB(A)
- Daytime in a quiet residential street 35-45 dB(A)
- Large busy office 50-60 dB(A)
- Lawn mower from 15 meters away 70 dB(A)

For further information please contact:

Environmental Health Services at Mount Isa City Council on 4747 3200