



Conflict Resolution Service

telephone 6162 4050



healthy neighbourhoods

**Free For Most Disputes
No Waiting List**

Preventing, managing and
resolving neighbourhood disputes

Your rights and responsibilities
as a neighbour

Relevant agencies and
organisations that can help you

It may

not always

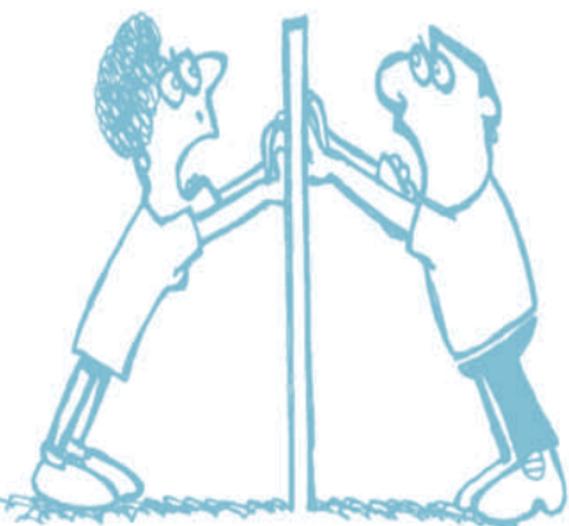
be possible

to resolve

every dispute,

but every dispute

can be managed



Preventing and managing neighbourhood disputes

No matter how healthy your neighbourhood is, problems can arise quite suddenly. If disputes are not dealt with, they can grow out of all proportion. So here are some suggestions for preventing and managing neighbourhood disputes.

- Get to know your neighbours.
- Consult with your neighbour before you take any action that may impact on them.
- Take your neighbour's concerns seriously, even if they seem small issues to you.
- When people feel heard and understood it is easier to work through a problem
- Don't assume the other person knows there is a problem—often they don't.
- Sometimes it is a simple misunderstanding.
- Discuss your approach with friends or family. They may have some useful ideas.
- Make an attempt to talk or write to your neighbour before involving authorities and other agencies.
- Remember to focus on the problem not the person.
- Work on what you can change, not what you can't.
- If you and your neighbour cannot agree on a change, implement strategies to reduce stress.
- Ask for help, seek advice

CONTACT:

Conflict Resolution Service

for impartial, specialist assistance in the prevention and management of your dispute.



Approaching your neighbour about a problem

DECIDE what is important to you—your needs and concerns.

MAKE a time and a place to discuss it with the other person—where both of you are comfortable and ready to talk.

STATE your concerns—from your point of view. Explain how you feel—do not attack or make accusations.

LET the other person respond. Their first response may be angry or upset. Give them time to understand.

HEAR the concerns of the other person—and show you have heard. Give yourself time to understand them.

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DISCUSS all the issues, which are of concern. A 'minor' issue left unsaid can become a major argument later on.

THINK about a range of possible solutions. The best ideas are not always the first ones. Work towards agreements, which satisfy the needs of both ('WIN-WIN').

BE CLEAR about what you have agreed on. Check your understanding with the other person. Ideally you may wish to put agreements in writing.

CHECK with each other after a while to see how things are going. If need be, make changes to the agreement.

ALLOW yourself and the other person to be human, to make mistakes, to get emotional, to be irrational, to be imperfect.

ACCEPT that sometimes a dispute can be too difficult to resolve; a sensible approach does not always work.

The Conflict Resolution Service (CRS) offers specialist help

Dispute counselling

Information, advice, support and referral.

Mediation

- Mediation is voluntary, impartial and confidential.
- Mediation is free and can be organised quickly.
- Mediators reflect the diversity of the community (i.e. in terms of age, gender and ethnicity).
- Mediations are conducted by two mediators.
- Mediators keep control of the process throughout the session.
- The people in dispute decide what is discussed and what is agreed.
- The person with whom you are having a dispute is contacted by CRS to invite them to mediation.
- Mediation can be between two or more parties.
- Most mediated disputes are resolved within one session.
- Mediation is not appropriate if you don't feel safe to agree/disagree with the other person.

Success rate

80% of mediated disputes reached agreement (2005/2006 CRS Annual Reports).

Training and information sessions

CRS conducts information and training sessions in conflict resolution skills for interested groups in the community, schools, workplace, government and non-government agencies.

Neighbourhood issues

Animal nuisance

An animal nuisance exists if an animal causes:

- Damage to property owned by a person other than the keeper
- Excessive noise, or
- Danger to the health of an animal or a person other than the keeper.

For more information contact:

Domestic Animal Services (DAS)

telephone: 6207 2424 (Monday–Friday), or
132 281 (After hours/emergency)

email: dogcontrol@act.gov.au

web: www.domesticanimals.act.gov.au

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Fences and structures, construction

For information on construction and obligations contact:

ACT Planning and Land Authority

telephone: 6207 1923

web: www.actpla.act.gov.au

Home business

For more information or if you have concerns about the impact of a home business contact:

ACT Planning and Land Authority

telephone: 6207 1923

web: www.actpla.act.gov.au

Long grass, dirty blocks

ACT Planning and Land Authority

telephone: 6207 1923

web: www.actpla.act.gov.au

Trees

Trees affecting neighbouring properties can be a cause of dispute. Many disputes can be resolved through communication between neighbours.

If a tree removal/damaging activity is required, you will need to seek permission from:

Environment ACT

telephone: 132 281

web: www.environment.act.gov.au

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Noise

Noise standards

for commercial and residential areas are covered under the *ACT Environment Protection Act 1997*. Amplified music, band practice, air conditioners and pool pumps must comply with the zone noise standards.

For information about noise levels and time restrictions for residential areas and specific activities, contact:

Environment ACT

telephone:
132 281

web:
www.environment.act.gov.au



Air and water

There is a total ban on the burning of garden or other waste in urban areas. Indoor fires, including slow combustion stoves, must be managed to minimise smoke emissions. Discharge of any waste into the stormwater system is an offence.

For information, contact:

Environment ACT

telephone: 132 281

web: www.environment.act.gov.au

Anti-social behaviour

Acts or threats involving violence, malicious property damage or theft and dangerous or noisy operation of motor vehicles should be reported to the ACT Police.

For more information contact:

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ACT Police

for routine enquiries contact your local police station or ring the police switchboard: 6256 7777

for police to attend: 131 444

for life-threatening emergencies only: 000

If you are concerned about acts or threats of violence, one option is to apply for a protection order from a court. However, another option is to consider mediation.

Mediations have been held at Police Stations to address safety concerns.

Unregistered cars, off-street parking and unsafe parking

Road User Services

telephone: 132 281

web: www.tams.act.gov.au

Legal advice

The ACT Legal Aid Office offers three services to people dealing with neighbourhood disputes:

- Free telephone advice: 9am–4pm, Monday–Friday on 1300 654 314.
- Free half-hour appointments available. Telephone: 6243 3471 for an appointment.
- Duty lawyers, at the Magistrates Court for help with your situation, including applications for Protection Orders. Telephone 6217 4299 for a free appointment.

Legal Aid

telephone advice: 1300 654 314

after hours: 0429 440 084

web: www.legalaid.canberra.net.au

Welfare Rights and Legal Centre

Provides free legal advice and assistance on private and government housing tenancy issues for low income earners.

telephone: 6247 2177

Small claims—Magistrates Court

An application can be made to the Small Claims Court to recover the cost of:

- Damages caused by someone else's actions.
- Nuisance (interference with your land, or your enjoyment of your land—for example an overflow from a neighbour's burst sewerage pipe onto your land).
- Trespass (unauthorised, uninvited entry onto, or remaining on, your land).

Fees apply.

telephone: 6217 4272



Other sources of help and advice

Canberra Connect

Gateway to ACT Government information and services

telephone: 13 22 81

web: www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au

ACT Ombudsman

The ACT Ombudsman can investigate complaints about the actions or decisions of any ACT Government agency.

telephone: 6276 0111

free call: 1300 362 072

web: <http://act.ombudsman.gov.au>

email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

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Mental Health Crisis Team

For advice and crisis service for people with mental illness or dysfunction.

telephone: 6205 1065 or 1800 629 354

web: www.mentalhealth.act.gov.au

ACT Health, Health Protection Service

Investigates complaints regarding public health hazards and disease risks.

telephone: 6205 1700

web: www.health.act.gov.au

ACT Housing Customer Liaison and Complaints Helpline

telephone: 6207 1515

web: www.dhcs.act.gov.au

Human Rights Office of the ACT

Investigates and conciliates complaints of discrimination, sexual harassment and racial vilification.

telephone: 6207 0576

web: www.hro.act.gov.au

email: human.rights@act.gov.au

Victim Services Scheme Access to counselling and other services for victims of crime.

telephone: 1800 822 272

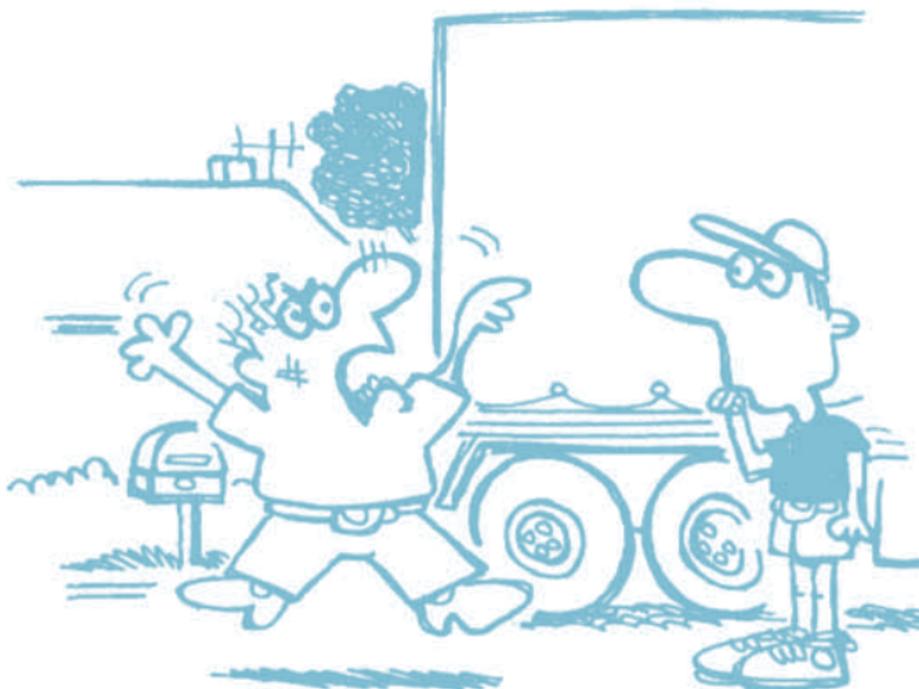
ACTewAGL Enquiries and emergencies: Electricity, water, sewerage, stormwater, trees in powerlines and natural gas.

telephone: 13 14 93

Translating and Interpreter Service

For language assistance:

telephone: 13 14 50



Conflict Resolution Service

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facsimile: 6162 4070

e-mail: mediation@crs.org.au

web: www.crs.org.au



Funded by
ACT Department of
Justice and Community Safety