



CRS

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERVICE

HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOODS


No Waiting List

Preventing, managing and resolving
neighbourhood disputes

**Your rights and responsibilities
as a neighbour**

6189 0590

crs.org.au



*Not every dispute
can be resolved,
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 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 them.
- Take your neighbour's concerns seriously, even if they seem like 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.

Telephone: 6189 0590

Web: www.crs.org.au

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 anger 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.

DISCUSS all the issues that 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.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION SERVICE OFFERS SPECIALIST HELP

Dispute counselling

Information, advice, support and referral.

Mediation

- Mediation is voluntary, impartial and confidential.
- Mediators reflect the diversity of the community (i.e. in terms of age, gender and ethnicity).
- 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

On average, 90% of mediations reach agreement.

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 (Mon–Fri), or 13 22 81 (After hours)

Email: dogcontrol@act.gov.au

Web: www.tccs.act.gov.au/city-living/pets

Fences and structures, construction

For information on construction and obligations contact:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Telephone: 6207 1923

Web: www.planning.act.gov.au

Home business

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

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Telephone: 6207 1923

Web: www.planning.act.gov.au

Long grass & dirty blocks if a fire hazard

This can be reported online to
Emergency Services Agency:

ACT Fire and Rescue

Telephone: 6205 2927 (business hours)

Web: www.esa.act.gov.au

Dirty blocks – Untidy Leasehold

Access Canberra

Telephone: 13 22 81

Web: www.accesscanberra.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:

Tree Protection & Assessment Unit

Telephone: 13 22 81

Web: www.tccs.act.gov.au

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: 13 22 81

Web: www.tccs.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: 13 22 81

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:

ACT Police

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

For police to attend: 13 14 44

For life-threatening emergencies only: 000

Mediations can be held at Police Stations to address safety concerns.

Unregistered cars, off-street parking and unsafe parking

Road User Services

Telephone: 13 22 81

Web: www.tccs.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: 1300 654 314 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, Office - 6243 3411

Web: www.legalaidact.org.au

Canberra Community Law

(formerly Welfare Rights and Legal Centre)

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

Telephone: Housing Law service 6218 7977

Web: www.canberracommunitylaw.org.au

ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal (ACAT)

An application can be made to ACAT 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: 6207 1740

Email: tribunal@act.gov.au

Web: www.acat.act.gov.au



OTHER SOURCES OF HELP AND ADVICE

Access Canberra

Gateway to ACT Government information
and services

Telephone: 13 22 81

Web: www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au

ACT Housing Customer Liaison and Complaints Helpline

Telephone: 6207 1515

Web: www.dhcs.act.gov.au

ACTewAGL

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

Telephone: 13 14 93

Web: www.actewagl.com.au

Translating and Interpreter Service

For language assistance.

Telephone: 13 14 50



Conflict Resolution Service

PHONE: 6189 0590

EMAIL: mediation@crs.org.au

WEB: www.crs.org.au

Funded by



ACT
Government