



Live music and entertainment noise

Canberra has a diverse musical culture and a history of providing a range of live music and entertainment events. These bring vibrancy to Canberra and have many community, social and tourism benefits for the city. However, noise from live performances and entertainment venues can disturb household activities, disrupt sleep and interfere with business activities. Noise that is particularly loud, penetrating or prolonged, can cause irritation and annoyance. It is important that noise from live music and entertainment venues is managed in a way that promotes and ensures a balance between the use and enjoyment of music venues and the protection of amenity for surrounding businesses and neighbouring households.

What you need to know

Existing venue managers and those looking to enter this industry need to understand the fundamentals of ACT laws applicable to noise emanating from indoor entertainment and live music performances. Outdoor concerts, or outdoor entertainment using amplified equipment, should conform to the conditions set out in the ACT Environment Protection Authority's Outdoor Concert Noise Environment Protection Policy of February 2001. The policy can be accessed through the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate website. Where an outdoor concert venue has the capacity to hold more than 2,000 people an Environmental Authorisation is required.

Environmental noise, including music noise, is regulated under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the Act). However, noise generated by people talking, laughing and yelling, such as patrons at outdoor events, is not covered by the Act. In situations where people noise or behaviour is believed to be unreasonable, the Australian Federal Police (phone 02 6256 7777) and, in the case of patrons on and adjacent to liquor licensed premises, Office of Regulatory Services (phone 02 6207 0562) are the responsible regulatory authorities.

Noise levels are measured in decibels, dB(A). The table below is an indicative guide to the usual decibel levels of some common everyday activities.

Activity/Object	dB(A)
Quiet bedroom	20-30
Daytime levels in quiet residential area	35-45
Lawn mower at 15 metres	70
Jack hammer at 1 metre	100

Permissible noise limits

Under the Act, permissible noise limits vary according to the approved land use zone in which the activity is located. The following limits must not be exceeded at the boundary of the land from which the noise is originating.

Location	7am–10pm (8am–10pm Sunday & Public Holidays)	10pm–7am (10pm–8am Sunday & Public Holidays)
Civic centre and other major town centres (Belconnen, Gungahlin, Woden and Tuggeranong)	60 dB(A)	50dB(A)
Group centres such as Dickson and Kingston	55 dB(A)	45dB(A)
Smaller local centres such as Griffith and Lyneham	50dB(A)	35dB(A)
Residential areas	45dB(A)	35dB(A)

Noise adjustments

Where a noise source contains certain characteristics such as tonality, impulsiveness, intermittency, irregularity or dominant low-frequency content, there is evidence to suggest that it can cause greater annoyance than other noise at the same level. Correction factors may be applied to the measured noise levels before comparison with the noise standards to account for the additional annoyance caused by these modifying factors. For more information regarding these modifying factors and how they may be applied contact the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).



Ways to minimise noise originating from your venue

- Be aware of the permissible noise limits and operating times for your area and ensure compliance with these limitations.
- Wherever possible locate amplifiers away from more sensitive areas, or at least ensure that they are projecting into the venue and not facing property boundaries.
- Keep windows and doors shut during the activity to reduce the amount of noise that can be heard from your venue and install double glazing or investigate other sound proofing measures such as air locks at entry and exit points to premises.
- Consider whether you may have a different and more appropriate location available for a live performance, or if it would be preferable to select a quieter entertainment activity as an alternative.
- Engage the services of an accredited acoustic consultant to develop a specific Noise Management Plan for your venue, individually tailored to the type of live music activity that you generally host. An acoustic engineer could also provide advice on possible means to contain or restrict the distance over which low frequency noise is able to penetrate.
- Be prepared to discuss any issues that may arise with affected parties and seek an amiable resolution or compromise wherever possible.

Managing complaints

In the case of excessive noise, a complaint may be lodged with the EPA. A complaint regarding noise pollution will be considered by the EPA, *only if it is made by a person affected by the noise*. The EPA will investigate the complaint and may issue a warning letter or fine. In some cases, an Environment Protection Order may be issued. If the noise continues to be a problem, it is a serious offence and could lead to prosecution in court.

For more information contact the Environment Protection Authority by calling Canberra Connect on 13 22 81.