

Fact sheet - air pollution - light

Light emissions can come from many sources including security lights, spot lights and flood lights, advertising signs and entertainment events. Sometimes light can affect neighbours and interfere with their normal activities. If severe enough, it can impact on people's health.

How to reduce light emissions

You can reduce light emissions by.

- Turning off lights when not in use or not needed. Consider using sensor switches.
- Locating lights as far as possible from neighbours and away from sensitive areas, like bedroom windows.
- Avoiding placing the light near a reflective surface and use existing features to hide the light source from view.
- Directing light downwards to illuminate the target area. If there is no alternative to up-lighting, try shields and baffles to help keep spill light to a minimum.
- Using equipment that can minimise light spread near, or above, the horizontal.
- Fitting only the number of light bulbs you need for an area. Over lighting can cause light pollution and waste energy.
- Keeping glare to a minimum. Ensure the main light beam is kept below 70 degrees from horizontal.

Complaints

If you are affected by light emissions, talk to the person responsible and try to achieve a solution. Give them time to do something about it.

If you can't reach a solution, you can lodge a complaint with Council. Alternatively, you can contact the Disputes Resolution Centre.

How to lodge a complaint with Council

To lodge a complaint with Council, you will need to provide:

- your name, address and phone number – this is kept confidential
- details of the emissions
 - source address
 - date and time it starts
 - the duration each time it happens.

To help you keep track of the details of the emissions, it is a good idea to fill out a daily log that you can submit with your complaint.

How Council handles complaints

Council investigates most light emissions using the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. Some sites have a development approval with conditions. Council investigates complaints about these sites using the *Planning Act 2016*.

When investigating light complaints, Council will consider:

- whether the site has a development approval with a condition specific to light emissions
- the amount of light being emitted
- the duration and rate of emission and the light's characteristics and qualities
- the sensitivity of the environment and the impacts
- the views of any other neighbours or complainants
- any measures that have been taken or could reasonably have been taken by the person causing the emission.

If a light emission is unlawful, Council may:

- issue an on-the-spot fine of 15 penalty units (individual) or 75 penalty units (corporation)
- issue a notice. This will detail the offence and the timeframe the responsible person has to rectify the problem. If the person does not comply with the notice, an on-the-spot fine of 15 penalty units (individual) or 75 penalty units (corporation) may also be issued
- prosecute.

If there is a development approval for the site, with a condition about light emissions, Council may issue a notice to ensure compliance with the condition. If the person does not comply, a fine of 20 penalty units (individual) or 100 penalty units (corporation) may be issued.

Complaints not investigated by Council

Council shares responsibility for light complaints with other authorities. Council does not investigate the following.

- Light emissions from freeways and highways including on and off ramps. This is the

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responsibility of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

- An environmentally relevant activity regulated by the Department of Environment and Science (e.g. chemical manufacturing).
- An environmentally relevant activity regulated by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (e.g. poultry farming).
- A state or local government premises or activity. This is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Science.

Useful websites

- Dispute Resolution Centre
<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/legal-mediation-and-justice-of-the-peace/setting-disputes-out-of-court/dispute-resolution-centres/>
- Department of Environment and Science
<https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/>
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
<https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/>
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
<https://www.tmr.qld.gov.au/>
- Standards Australia
<http://www.standards.org.au/>