

AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE ISSUES

Each of the State Environmental Agencies was invited to provide a short report on recent activities in relation to noise policies and emerging issues.

ACT

Sergei de Bray

The ACT government finalized the **Motor Sports Noise Environment Protection Policy** late 2002. The policy was developed under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the Act) to balance the need to provide adequate protection to neighbouring residents from noise with the rights of motor sports enthusiasts to participate in their sport. A number of motor sports venues exist in the ACT that impact to varying degrees on nearby residents and it is not economically practicable to relocate existing venues in the foreseeable future. Having been through a relatively long gestation period, the policy also reflects the need to balance the social, political and environmental aspects in particular 'catchments' affected by motor sport noise.

The policy includes several measures to manage adverse noise impacts including limiting the level of noise, number of events per year, the time when events can take place and spread of events during the year. The policy facilitates the flow of various types of motor sport noise information between Environment ACT (as the regulator), motor sport enthusiasts and those affected by motor sports noise. As well as encouraging better scheduling of noisy motor sport events at regularly used venues, prior notification allows affected residents to better plan their home activities.

A key challenge in the development of the policy has been the incorporation of an event credit system with a feedback loop for the purpose of limiting the total noise load emanating from particular venues each year. Some motor sport organisations have an allocation of event credits that enable them to generate noise exceeding a set limit at a compliance location. For example, one event credit allows an additional 5 dB(A) over the limit on a day and at the maximum end of the scale, four credits allow up to 20 dB(A) over the limit. It should be noted where noise is below the limit the amount of motor sport is not restricted by the Act. With the system having its fair share of complications, regular meetings were convened to assist stakeholders learn from each other to achieve continued improvements implementing the trial policy. The policy will be reviewed within three years to ensure adequate noise management is occurring at the more contentious venues.

A policy for **Outdoor Concert Noise** preceded the motor sports noise policy and similar concepts were used. The policy also includes an event credit system as a mechanism to ensure a balance between community expectations and the protection of environmental noise standards.

Policies on environmental noise may be found via www.environment.act.gov.au

NEW SOUTH WALES

Chris Beasley

The New South Wales EPA shares responsibility for enforcing noise control regulations with local government, the NSW Police and the Waterways Authority. During 2002 we have concentrated on implementing the Government's Environmental Criteria for **Road Traffic Noise** and **NSW Industrial Noise Policy**; continuing development of a policy on rail noise; and providing support for the work of local councils in noise control.

As part of our support for councils, we developed the draft **Noise Management Guide for Local Government**. This guide outlines the legislative framework, field procedures and management strategies for avoiding, minimising and regulating the noise problems commonly encountered by council officers. Selected councils with experience in managing a wide range of noise control issues reviewed the draft in June 2002. We expect to consult all councils before finalising the guide.

In December 2001, we distributed a video called **Managing Rural Noise** to all rural councils. This video examines a range of noise problems commonly experienced by council officers in rural areas.

The EPA also assisted the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) to develop its **Environmental Noise Management Manual**, which outlines how to implement the road traffic noise policy. During the year, we participated in enforcement operations with the RTA and NSW Police to reduce excessive noise from vehicle engines and sound systems.

The EPA continued its development of a policy to manage noise from the NSW **rail network**. The policy will provide detailed guidance for assessing and controlling the impact of rail noise. During the year we contacted more than 70 stakeholders from the rail industry, government, councils and environment groups to identify rail noise issues. We also reviewed over 130 technical and policy-related papers to identify world best practice for managing railway noise.

On the national front we contributed to the National Road Transport Commission's review of the Australian Design Rules for motor vehicle noise. Mechanisms for dealing with noise from the brakes of heavy vehicles were also reviewed. We promoted a more effective and practical solution for use by the police and councils to address this problem. The EPA was also a member of a steering committee, commissioned by the Commonwealth organisation EnHealth, to research the effects of environmental noise on public health. The report has not yet been released.

In 2003 we will strengthen noise control by completing a rail noise policy and a guide on neighbourhood noise, and initiating a policy on construction noise. Policies on environmental noise may be found via <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Jason Turner

The **Environment Protection (Noise) Policy** (draft Noise EPP) will replace the two current Environment Protection Policies (EPPs) relating to noise in South Australia, the Environment Protection (Industrial Noise) Policy 1994, and the Environment Protection (Machine Noise) Policy 1994. This new EPP will provide an up to date response to noise issues and will provide clarity and transparency for industry, local government, planners, authorised officers and the residential portion of the community in securing of compliance with the Environment Protection Act 1993 (the EP Act). A 3-month public consultation period commences at the end of March 2003.

Draft guidelines on **Audible Bird Scaring Devices** are to be released for public comment in conjunction with the draft noise EPP. Managing orchards and vineyards, bird populations, and efforts to scare birds from sensitive production; while not unreasonably impacting upon the quality of life of nearby residents is not a simple matter. Specific guidelines are required for audible bird scaring devices to recognise the unique noise generating characteristics of these devices and the adverse impacts these devices can have on the community.

Guidelines on **Wind Farms Environmental Noise** aim to help developers, planning and enforcement authorities, other government agencies and the broader community assess environmental noise impacts from wind farms.

During 2003, the EPA will be undertaking a number of new projects which will include guidelines for Music Noise, Rural Noise and Rail Noise.

Policies on environmental noise may be found via www.environment.sa.gov.au/epa

TASMANIA

Bill Wilson

Initial legislative control of environmental noise sources was established under the *Environment Protection Act 1973* and the associated *Environment Protection (Noise) Regulations 1977*. The 1973 Act was replaced by a package of planning and resource management legislation in 1993 and 1994. The 1977 regulations are still in force but are currently under review. This review is coupled to the development of an Environmental Protection Policy (Noise). The following legislation is in force: *The Land Use Planning and Appeals Act 1993*; *The Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*, *The Dog Control Act 2000*; and the *Environment Protection (Noise) Regulations 1977* which provide maximum dB(A) levels for certain types of machinery such as off-road vehicles, heat pumps and chainsaws, permissible distances and hours of operation

The Tasmanian Government is currently developing an **Environment Protection Policy on Noise** in response to the need to improve protection of the acoustic environment. The policy will further the objectives of the Resource Management and Planning System, in particular the objectives of the *Environmental Management and Pollution*

Control Act 1994. A Draft Policy has been released for public comment and it is expected that the assessment will be completed by the end of 2003.

This draft policy includes noise emission standards for industry, transport and neighbourhood noise sources and standards for noise sensitive developments such as residences, schools and hospitals. It defines a range of acoustic environmental quality objectives that should, ideally, not be exceeded at specified receptor types. They are not intended to be used directly by regulatory authorities as noise limits for activities or sources. Achievement of the acoustic environmental quality objectives is a long-term goal for all situations, and the objectives serve as an indicator for judging the effectiveness of this policy and other noise control instruments. Planning authorities should take the objectives into account when making planning decisions. The acoustic environmental quality objectives and noise emission standards are based on the most sensitive receptor in the area under consideration and are not dependent on land use zoning.

Current information on ambient noise levels in Tasmania is limited and further analysis and reporting is required to appropriately understand and manage noise. The Tasmanian acoustic environment is not well studied and further research is required.

Directions for management of the acoustic environment include: finalising the Environment Protection Policy (Noise); establishing a program of monitoring of the acoustic environment to support better identification of objectives; and updating monitoring and recording systems to permit greater sharing of noise data among agencies.

Policies on environmental noise may be found via www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

John Macpherson

Environmental noise legislation in Western Australia is primarily administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) under provisions of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. The *Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997* provide the main regulatory instrument for noise under the Act.

The DEP noise section has three permanent specialist staff, all within its Environmental Regulation Division. The main tasks of the group fall into four areas *Policy development* – noise regulation amendment, transport noise policy, etc; *Environmental impact assessment* – provision of advice to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on noise impacts of new proposals, including town planning proposals involving rezoning of land; *Support* – training, authorisation and technical support for the local government Environmental Health Officers (EHO's), DEP Inspectors and police who deal with day-to-day noise issues around the State; *Regulation* – preparing approvals and exemptions and advice on appeals.

The local government noise complaints **survey results** from 2001/2002 indicated that noise from barking dogs was the most common source of complaints, accounting for over 40% of the total of over 10,000 complaints. Noise from barking dogs is dealt with by local government rangers under the *Dog Act 1975*, which is currently undergoing a major review. Of the non-canine noise sources, radios and stereos were the most common, followed by alarms and sirens, construction noise, power tools/workshops, caged birds, musical instruments and airconditioners. The DEP has produced a brochure for airconditioner installers in a bid to achieve greater compliance at the time of installation.

The **noise regulations** have been in force for 5 years. They regulate noise emitted from premises and received at another premises, by means of assigned noise levels based on the land use zoning. Special provisions are included for agricultural noise, blasting, construction noise, specified equipment on residential premises, bellringing/calls to worship, certain community activities, outdoor events, and an approvals process for persons who believe they cannot reasonably and practicably comply with the assigned levels. A 2-year review of the regulations in 1999 found that, while the regulations

were working quite well, some amendments were needed. The issues currently under review include local government essential services such as garbage collection; motor sports; entertainment precincts and priority venues; and the assigned levels for noise received on industrial premises.

In 2002 the WA Planning Commission (WAPC) released a draft Statement of Planning Policy with regard to **aircraft noise** for land use planning around Perth Airport and a final version is expected to be released this year.

Road and rail transportation noise has for several years been the subject of a working group project under the WAPC's Infrastructure Coordinating Committee, aiming to develop a whole-of-government policy to deal mainly with new infrastructure proposals and land use planning adjacent to transport corridors. After engaging an acoustical consultant to review other policies, recommend a policy framework and evaluate the framework under various transport scenarios, the working group is about to commence drafting a policy document for wider discussion.

Policies on environmental noise may be found via www.epa.wa.gov.au



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