

LIGHT POLLUTION

Light can cause pollution when it becomes a nuisance to your neighbours. This information aims to help you reduce the possible nuisance of outdoor lighting and prevent light pollution. Light can come from numerous sources including security lights, spot lights and flood lights. You should try to prevent light from your property spilling onto other properties.

WHAT IS LIGHT POLLUTION?

Light pollution is best described as artificial light that is allowed to illuminate, or intrude upon, areas not intended to be lit. Intrusion of over-bright or poorly-directed lights onto neighbouring property can affect the neighbours' right to enjoy their own property. An example would be a security light installed and positioned such that the light shines into a neighbour's bedroom window.

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD 4282 – CONTROL OF THE OBTRUSIVE EFFECTS OF OUTDOOR LIGHTING

All outdoor lighting must comply with *Australian Standard 4282 – Control of the obtrusive effects of outdoor lighting*, which sets out guidelines for control of the obtrusive effects of outdoor lighting and gives recommended limits for relevant lighting levels to contain these effects within tolerable levels.

In AS4282 the definition of outdoor lighting is any form of permanently installed exterior lighting and interior lighting systems which emit light that impacts on the outdoor environment.

As the nuisance effects of outdoor lighting are best controlled by appropriate design, AS4282 primarily focuses on new lighting installations. New developments must comply with this standard.

It is rarely possible to contain all light from outdoor lighting within the boundaries of the property on which the light is situated; however this should be the aim.

AS 4282 does not apply to road lighting, advertising signs and lighting systems that are of a cyclic or flashing nature.

WAYS TO REDUCE POTENTIAL OUTDOOR LIGHT POLLUTION

- > Turn off lights when you don't need them, including security lights. Consider installing sensor switches on outside lights.
- > Locate lights as far as possible from neighbours and away from sensitive areas, such as bedroom windows.
- > Avoid placing a light near a reflective surface.
- > Use existing features to hide the light source from view.
- > Wherever possible, direct light downwards to illuminate the target area.
- > If there is no alternative to up-lighting, fit shields and baffles to help keep spill light to a minimum. Some equipment can minimise light spread near, or above, the horizontal.
- > Don't over light. It can cause light pollution and wastes energy.



LIGHT POLLUTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCE

The *Environment Protection Act, 1997* (the Act) is the ACT legislation that protects the environment from pollution and its effects. Under the Act, a person has a general environmental duty to take all practical and reasonable steps to minimise environmental harm or environmental nuisance caused by their activities.

This includes nuisance related to light. However there is no fixed level which constitutes a statutory nuisance; individual circumstances differ and each case has to be judged on its own merits.

EXCESSIVE LIGHT – WHAT CAN BE DONE?

If you are experiencing nuisance lighting you should initially try to solve the problem by discussing it, in a calm and friendly manner, with whoever is responsible for the light. Alternatively, you may wish to initiate mediation through the Conflict Resolution Service on 6162 4050.

Where the issue cannot be resolved through these mechanisms, you may lodge a complaint with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). Before registering a complaint with the EPA, identify the source of the light.

The EPA will initially send a letter to advise the alleged light producer of their responsibilities under the Act and invite them to discuss the matter. In most cases the matter can be resolved at this stage.

If it is not resolved and a follow-up complaint about the light is made to the EPA, the EPA will investigate further, visiting the site and assessing the lighting. If the EPA considers the lighting to be a nuisance, a warning letter or on-the-spot fine may be issued or, depending on the circumstances, an Environment Protection Order (EPO) may be issued. A breach of an EPO is a serious offence and could lead to prosecution in court.