

8.1. MM01: Noise Pollution

Over the last decade noise pollution has steadily increased. The noise generated from increased traffic congestion, increased construction, and construction of major State Government infrastructure projects are impacting health and quality of life in our Local Government Area (and across Greater Sydney more generally).

On 17 February 2024 I received a thoughtful letter from a resident of McMahons Point, Mr Bruce Handmer, raising concerns about noise pollution. That letter was referred to, tabled, and considered by the Environment Reference Group meeting held on 5 March 2024.

Subsequently, I received a letter from Mr Steven Cooper dated 13 March 2024. I attach a copy of those letters to this Minute.

The Environment Reference Group meeting resolved to recommend to Council that it lobby the State Government to review noise criteria and review Council's own conditions of consent and approach to noise.

Notably, Mr Cooper submits that:

I believe the following approaches to these sources of noise pollution can practically and affordably reduce the level of noise disruption and affect an overall improvement to health and quality of living.

- 1. Transition to electric powered buses*
- 2. Install traffic calming*
- 3. Encourage (via council enforcement) the use of electric (battery or cord) powered gardening tools*
- 4. Implement permanent noise meters and CCTV cameras and follow up with warnings and fines issued to repeat offenders in the area*
- 5. Legislate and enforce acceptable noise levels by commercial operators, by hour of the day*

These residents are expressing frustration and concern that is reflected throughout our community.

I therefore recommend:

- 1. THAT** Council strongly advocate for the State Government to address increasing noise pollution through a review of the EPA Noise Guidelines, adoption of electric vehicles, provisions in relation to the use of electric power tools in urban areas, noise, and CCTV monitoring in areas experiencing a rise in "hoon" cars.
- 2. THAT** Council undertake a review of standard noise conditions of consent for both construction period and general operation.

**COUNCILLOR ZOË BAKER
MAYOR**

February 15, 2024

Zoe Baker
Mayor
North Sydney Council

Noise Pollution – seeking changes to policies and regulations to curb noise pollution

Via email

Cc North Sydney Council GM

Dear Zoe,

I will table this issue and letter for consideration by the Environment Reference Group but wish to separately bring to your attention, the need for North Sydney Council to include noise pollution in its policies and building approval conditions as well as taking a more active role in seeking to attenuate as much noise pollution as possible.

North Sydney Council has an enviable reputation for protecting the environment. This includes efforts to stop or limit environmental pollution such as to air, water and land. However, there appears to be little done to control environmental noise pollution, that is noise that is not workplace related. (Noise pollution is described simply as 'unwanted noise'.)

Whilst it has long been acknowledged that noise pollution is bad for the health of people and animals, unlike air and water pollution, noise pollution is increasing and recent reports carried by the media highlight just how damaging it is for the wellbeing and health of humans. Noise pollution has been clearly linked to cardiovascular disease and mental health issues amongst many other adverse health impacts. Exposure to regular noise increases people's levels of stress.

The WHO carried out a major 10 year study in western Europe in 2011 ('Burden of disease from environmental noise'), which concluded traffic noise was only second to air pollution in its harmful effects on people. The WHO has documented seven categories of adverse health effects of noise pollution on humans which include sleep disturbance, cardiovascular disease, and negative social behaviour. Other studies have focused on the economic loss that comes from noise pollution. Noise is particularly problematic for children.

Residents of North Sydney are regularly subjected to noise pollution well above NSW Government and EPA guidelines and regulations. This includes noisy cars, party boats with excessive amplification and/ or large numbers of noisy passengers, and building construction work.

North Sydney Council does not appear to have taken action to mitigate noise pollution in the same way that they have worked to lower water, land and air pollution. Controls appear to largely reflect the broadest regulated requirements of the NSW Government. Ie that certain noisy work must only be carried out within certain times.

I urge North Sydney Council to consider what changes (including for example DA conditions) can be taken to lessen the growing problem of noise pollution. It does not appear that DA conditions take into account that specific types of work or ways to carry out that work produce significantly more noise pollution than other approaches. For example, excavating through sandstone for below ground rooms and garages often uses a powered disc saw. The noise from these saws is staggeringly high.

Additionally, the demolition of buildings rather than renovation and reuse creates serious noise and waste issues.

The approval of motorised work platforms instead of scaffolding to carry out renovation work at Blues Point Tower, McMahons Point, is a case in point, and the situation that leads me to write this letter. The use of the moving platforms rather than fixed scaffolding has subjected residents at the Tower and those anywhere within half a kilometre to regular but unpredictable sirens that automatically sound when any one of the 4 platforms is moving down the building. On some days, the sirens run for up to 5 minutes every hour or so. On other days, the sirens have run for short periods, almost constantly.

NSW Noise Pollution regulations state that noise shouldn't exceed 5dB above background noise in any habitable room. The building work and alarms are between 5dB and 10dB above background noise in a habitable room 100m from the work. They are clearly heard 500m or more from the building site.

Laws and regulations regarding residential noise in NSW indicate that the noise level should 'not be able to be heard inside an adjoining premises', or 'during the day (7 am to 10 pm), the acceptable noise level is [no more than] 5 decibels above the background noise in the area. During the night (10 pm to 7 am), the noise level should not exceed the background noise by more than 5 decibels'.

Most building construction work exceeds these guidelines. The background noise around midday on the 15th February was between 47-53dB inside a bedroom in a solid brick building about 100m away. Sirens on the Blues Point Tower increased this to around 57-59dB.

Given the Blues Point Tower work is taking a year to complete, this is subjecting residents in the area to a car alarm type noise, regularly but unpredictably, throughout every day except Sunday, for a year. This is simply awful. There must be a better way!

I respectfully request that North Sydney Council look closely at their policies to see what can be done to reduce the growing issue of noise pollution.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Handmer



Community Member, Environment Reference Group, NSC
Chair Westbridge Owners Strata (4308) Committee

Steven Cooper

Home owner / Resident / Executive Member of Strata
Committee 4308

Zoe Baker
Mayor
North Sydney Council

13th March, 2024

Re. Noise Pollution

Dear Mayor,

Since moving to McMahon's Point in 2016 I have experienced a steady increase in noise pollution. My neighbour and chair of the Westbridge Strata Committee where I live, Mr Bruce Handmer, has recently articulated to this Council, many of the contributors to noise in the area and the significant impact that this pollution continues to have on physical and mental health and the overall quality of living in the North Sydney district. I would like to add my support to all the points that Bruce raised in his letter dated February 15th 2024.

My unit is at the front of the building, with the main bedroom adjacent to Blues Point Road, directly opposite Warung Road. In this location, at the base of the hill, my unit is subject to excessive noise from vehicles they accelerate north on Blues Point Road. The loudest noises, in my experience, in order of frequency and volume are;

1. Sydney Buses
2. Hoons with excessively noisy vehicles doing burnouts
3. Gardening contractors using petrol powered gardening tools
4. Motorcycles (particularly Harley Davidsons and similar deliberately noisy brands)
5. Party boats
6. Construction activities (including the Blues Point Tower lift siren as mentioned by Bruce Handmer)

In the same order as the above, I believe the following approaches to these sources of noise pollution can practically and affordably reduce the level of noise disruption and affect an overall improvement to health and quality of living.

1. Transition to electric powered buses
2. Install traffic calming
3. Encourage (via council enforcement) the use of electric (battery or cord) powered gardening tools
4. Implement permanent noise meters and CCTV cameras and follow up with warnings and fines issued to repeat offenders in the area
5. Legislate and enforce acceptable noise levels by commercial operators, by hour of the day

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Thank you for your ongoing attention to noise pollution. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in advancing corrective actions in the North Sydney Council areas of responsibility and operation.

Warm Regards,

Steven Cooper



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