

Noise standards: extending daytime standards into the evening

REPORT ON WHAT WE HEARD



NOISE STANDARDS IN THE ACT

The ACT Government has proposed the extension of daytime noise standards on Friday and Saturday nights in the city, town centres, and group centres.

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate undertook consultation with the community on proposed changes to the *Environment Protection Regulation 2005* (the Regulation).

The changes proposed are to extend daytime noise standards on Friday and Saturday nights from 10pm to midnight in the City and town centres, and from 10pm to 11pm in group centres.

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THE CONVERSATION

The consultation period began on 9 August 2019 and concluded on 22 September 2019.

The conversation was facilitated by an online survey on YourSay (the ACT Government's community engagement website). Written submissions were also invited.

To engage the community:

- A media release was published 31/07/2019 by Minister Gentleman on the reforms to noise regulations in inner city, town centres.
- An article was published in Our Canberra online, informing the public of the consultation period.
- Emails were sent to individuals, community, and industry stakeholders involved in the Urban Sounds engagement.

WHO ENGAGED

Survey

A total of 216 people participated in the Urban Sounds and Entertainment Survey. Most participants resided in or near the city centre, a town centre or a group centre. Many owned businesses in these areas.

Written submissions

Four written submissions were received, all from residents living nearby to the inner city, town centres, and group centres.

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Social media

A total of 3,184 people were engaged through Facebook and Twitter social media platforms (Figures 1 – 3).

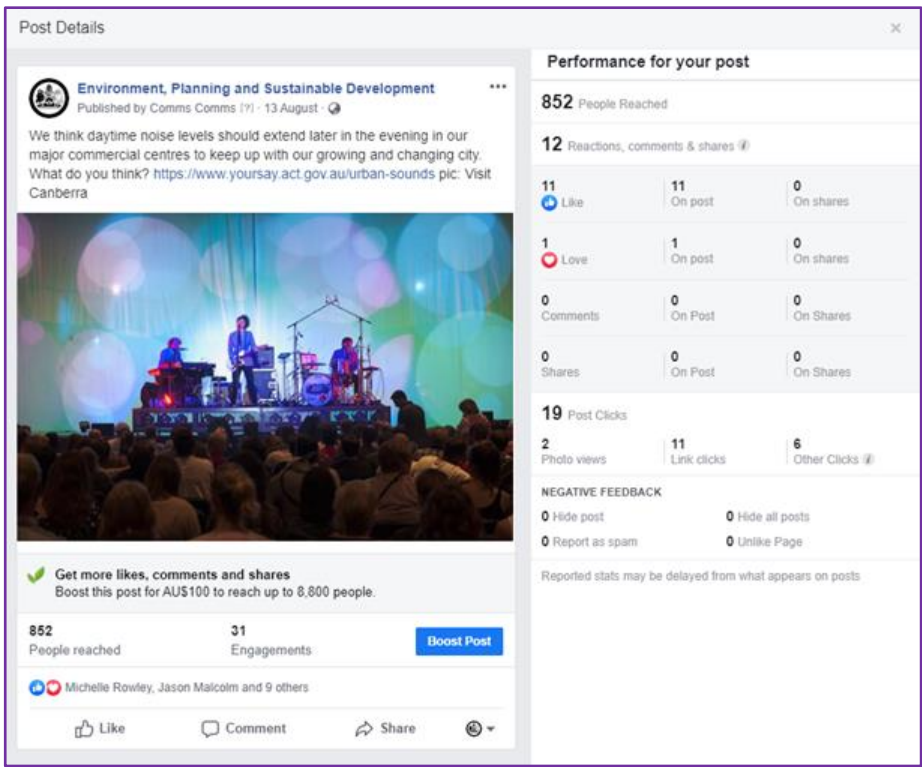


Figure 1 Social media post made 13 August 2019, reaching 852 people.

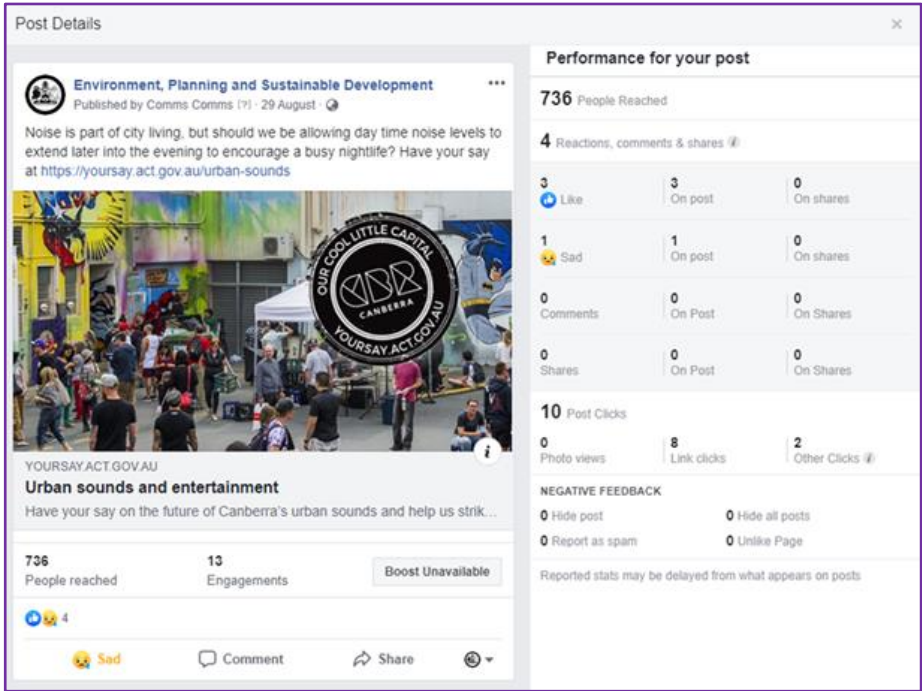


Figure 2 Social media post made 29 August 2019, reaching 736

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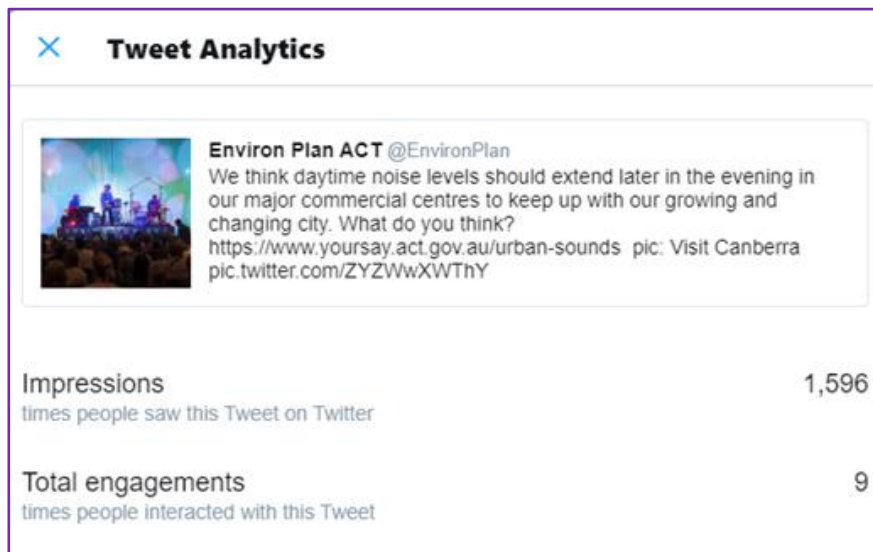


Figure 3 Twitter post, reaching 1596 people.

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Key insights from the community

The majority of the survey participants agreed with extending daytime noise levels.

- Regarding the city and town centres, (69%) agreed with extending the daytime noise standards to midnight on Fridays and Saturdays (see Figure 4)
- Regarding group centres, (65%) agreed with extending daytime noise standards to 11pm on Fridays and Saturdays (See Figure 5).

Comments from residents living nearby indicated they were already impacted (mainly through disturbed sleep) by loud music and patronage in public spaces associated with venues and events to which the regulations cater.

Some comments indicated a view that the regulations are not strong enough, and any relaxation of them was considered as encouraging an existing problem. Those opposing the changes considered:

- existing noise standards as not strong enough, and do not require further extension
- existing noise standards as adequate, and changes to them would provide no additional benefit or would detriment some stakeholders
- extended daytime noise standards would further contribute to “noise pollution”
- extended daytime noise standards would negatively impact on community health and wellbeing, particularly through disturbance to sleep and the right to a quiet living environment.

Those supporting the extended hours viewed existing noise standards as a limitation to the success of Canberra’s live music entertainment industry, night-time economy, and general nightlife vibrancy.

Some comments indicated they welcomed the proposal to extend daytime noise standards as it was perceived to benefit those who enjoy or have an interest in the live music industry, entertainment events, and weekend nightlife. Those supporting the changes considered:

- existing regulations to be too strong, and a limitation to night-time entertainment
- extended daytime noise standards to support community health and wellbeing by providing for recreation and tourism
- extended daytime noise standards to support the local entertainment and live music industry and the night-time economy
- extended daytime noise standards to support local businesses.

Other key matters raised during the consultation period:

- Concern that building noise standards are inadequate to mitigate ambient sound entering surrounding buildings
- Conflict between residents and venues providing night-time music and other entertainment in areas zoned to cater for both purposes was raised by both residents and venues.

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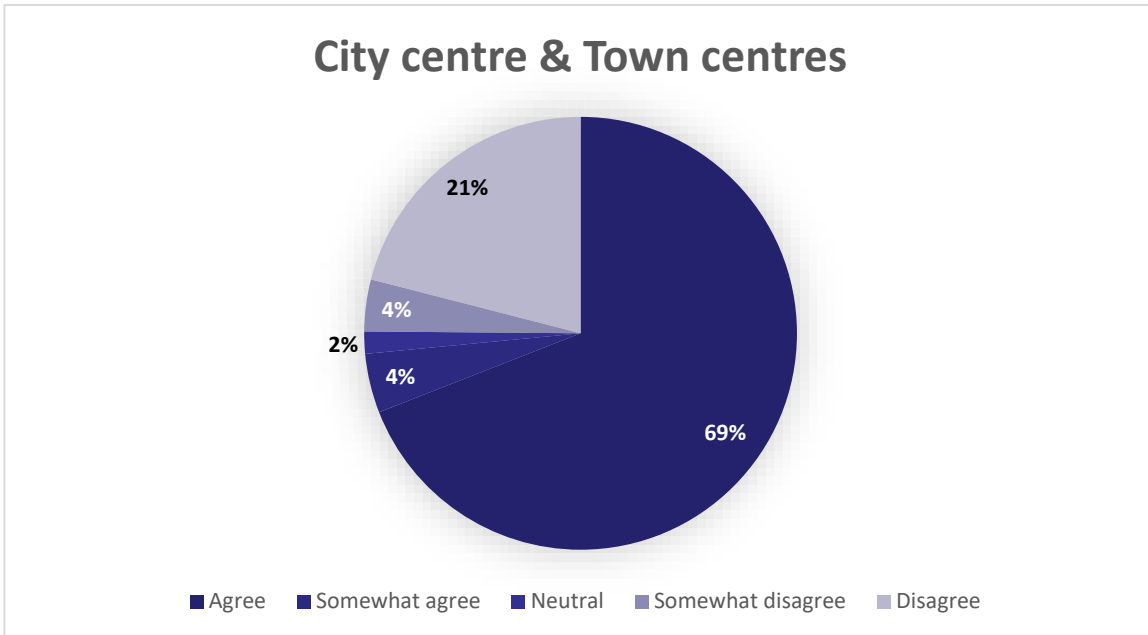


Figure 1 Responses to the question: *In the city centre (which including the Braddon commercial area) and town centres (like Woden, Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong) daytime noise levels are allowed until 10pm. Do you agree with extending this until midnight?* A total of 181 responses were received.

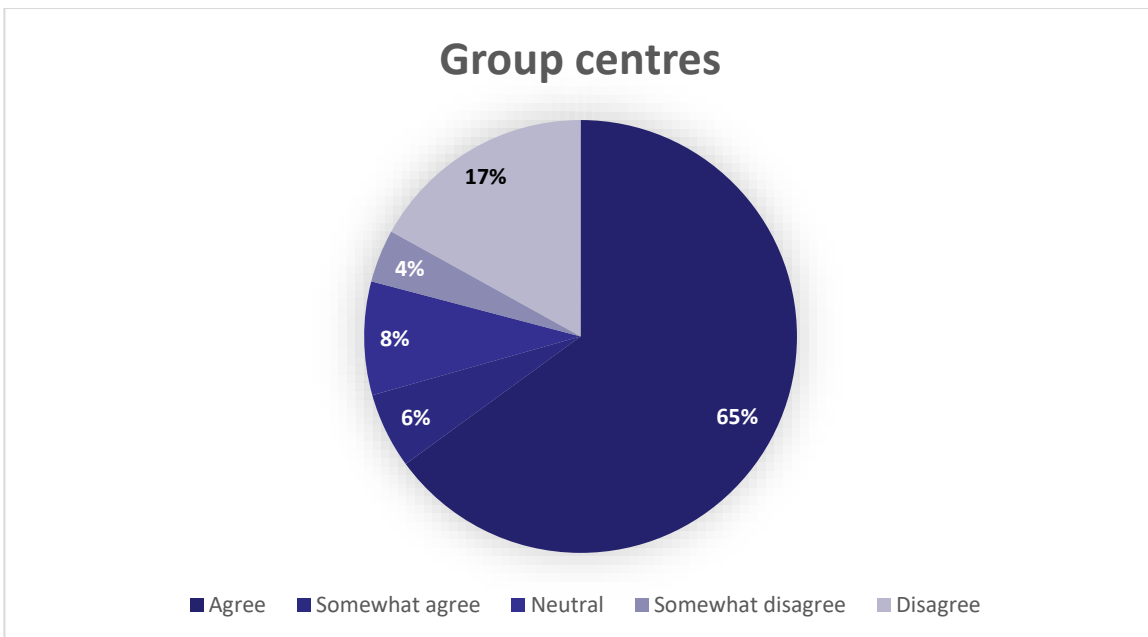


Figure 2 Responses to the question: *In group centres like Dickson and Kingston, daytime noise levels are allowed until 10pm. Do you agree with extending this to 11pm?* A total of 177 responses were received.