

CT 21/8/06

Some hot air vented over air-conditioning noise

Since most domestic ducted reverse-cycle air-conditioners do not comply with ACT noise legislation, neighbourly cooperation is generally required if the units are to be used.

An installer told Consumer Voice that staff at the ACT Environment Protection Authority had said domestic ducted systems of all brands would not comply in most situations, so they were generally placed to cause as little disturbance to neighbours as possible.

The installer has declined a Hughes man's request for reimbursement of \$770 paid to an acoustic consultant, and to relocate the compressor at no charge.

Mr K. said a report by the consultant had made it clear that in its present site, the compressor would not comply with the ACT environment protection regulations for day or night-time use.

A neighbour had complained about the noise, and Environment ACT had issued a notice that the



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compressor contravened the Environment Protection Act.

Mr K. said the siting of the compressor had been based on a recommendation by the installer.

The installer denied this. He said that when quoting on the job, he had told Mr K. his preferred site for the compressor would be too close to his neighbour's house.

"We believe Mr K. was made aware of all possible noise problems associated with air-conditioning," he said. But when staff delivered the compressor, Mr K. had said he did not want it sited as shown on the map drawn by the installer, but where Mr K. had been advised it

should not be installed. "As I was not able to be contacted, the customer insisted that it be installed as he requested. All we can do is recommend. It is ultimately the customer's decision."

Mr K. had accepted a quote to move the compressor. He had declined to pay in advance, so the work had not been done.

Mr K. has not responded to a letter from Consumer Voice which included the installer's comments.

The installer said the very few noise complaints about domestic air-conditioning appeared to be prompted more by personality clashes.

"In this instance the complaining neighbour has a similar air-conditioner of equal noise on the opposite side of his house, affecting his neighbour." In another complaint about air-conditioners, a Ngunnawal woman said she had been prevented from having a split system in her unit because of an

objection by only one other resident. One objection was all that was needed, because no split-system air-conditioner complied with noise regulations for units.

A specialist confirmed this.

But he said hundreds of air-conditioners were installed in town houses and units with the consent of the body corporate.

After recommending an appropriate unit, he suggested people get approval from their body corporate.

Some bodies corporate restricted the hours of operation.

Most complaints about noise from air-conditioners occurred in summer, when neighbours' windows were open. Most also involved existing neighbourhood disputes.

■ **Consumer Voice investigates genuine matters of concern. Name and address are required. Contact Graham Downie, telephone 6280 2206, email graham.downie@canberratimes.com.au, write PO Box 7155, CBC, ACT, 2610.**