Some Suggestions To Alleviate Nuisance Behaviour

The following list provides some of the main reasons why dogs bark
• Lack of exercise
• Inadequate yard space
• Boredom
• Not enough human companionship
• Inadequate shelter from weather conditions
• Hungry or thirsty
• Medical condition
• Provocation
• Disturbances
• Change to family structure
• Change of territory
• Anxiety

Of course dogs also bark to alert their owners of trouble such as an intruder entering the property or perhaps fire. Remember, a 'dog's idea of an intruder' may differ to that of the owner, it could include cats, possums, other dogs, or even birds flying across the property as 'intruders'. Whilst it is acceptable for a dog to bark to warn its owner of an intruder, it is the owner's responsibility to train the dog not to bark at 'normal occurrences' such as possums, cats, birds etc. Barking at 'normal movement/noises' from adjoining properties should be considered to be unacceptable behaviour.

Solutions
Lack of exercise, inadequate yard space, boredom
Dogs become bored when they are confined in a back yard. This problem can be compounded when the yard is small, the dog is kept on a chain, locked in an enclosure or on a run. Dogs like to explore and enjoy new experiences. This problem may be overcome when the dog is treated as a member of the family, is included on family outings and taken on regular walks.

Loneliness, lacking human company
Dogs are social animals and enjoy the companionship of other dogs and of their human owners. Those that are left for long periods of time without companionship can become discontented or lonely. Dogs need to interact with other dogs and with people to keep them stimulated. Dogs that are not permitted to have regular socialisation with other animals and humans can become destructive, fearful, or bark excessively as a plea for attention. In the owner's absence, an old jumper containing the owner's scent may comfort the dog. A radio left on inside the house may give the dog the impression that it is not alone on the property. The radio may also help deter potential intruders.
Inadequate shelter
Dogs require shelter from all the weather elements and may cry for attention if it is uncomfortable due to the hot, cold, windy or wet weather conditions. They need shelter that provides soft, dry bedding, protection from the heat in the summer and warm and dry in the winter.

Hungry or thirsty
Dogs require plenty of fresh water and need to be fed well balanced dietary food every day to remain healthy and contented. A dog will soon let its owner know by barking, howling or whimpering if it has not been fed or has no water to drink.

Medical condition
An obvious or underlying medical condition can be the cause of howling, whimpering and barking. Flea or worm infestations, skin allergies and some injuries which are usually easily detected and treated can cause a dog to make excessive noise. A veterinarian should be consulted to eliminate any medical condition from being the cause of excessive noise.

Provocation
Remove the source of the provocation or remove the dog. If the source of provocation is a person, discuss and solve the problem with the person or if the person is unapproachable, contact the Dispute Settlement Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation Source</th>
<th>Possible Solution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>Check reason for barking. Retrain dog not to bark at birds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possums</td>
<td>Check reason for barking. House dog indoors over night when possums are active. Have possums professionally removed. Retrain dogs not to bark at possums.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dogs &amp; Cats</td>
<td>Check reason for barking. Locate owners of intruding dog or cat and discuss problem with owner; request dog/cat owner to confine animal to its own property. Retrain dog not to bark at other dogs or cats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neighbours activities</td>
<td>Check reason for barking. Retrain dog not to bark at normal noise/activities taking place on neighbouring properties.</td>
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<td>Sirens &amp; Alarms</td>
<td>Some breeds of dogs are susceptible to barking/howling at the sound of sirens/alarms. Dogs have sensitive hearing and the volume or pitch of a siren/alarm may actually aggravate the dog. The dog should be reassured and either taken inside or distracted from the noise and quietened. Some dogs can be desensitised to the sound of sirens/alarms to solve the barking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uninvited visitors</td>
<td>Check the reason for barking, take appropriate action, reward, reassure and quieten dog when intruding visitor has left property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcomed visitors</td>
<td>Check reason for barking. Welcome visitor in, reassure dog and</td>
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<tr>
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<td>socialise visitor with dog to enable dog to learn that visitor is a friend and not an intruder.</td>
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<td>Storms &amp; thunder</td>
<td>The dog should be reassured and either taken inside or quietened.</td>
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<td>Change to family structure</td>
<td>Dogs are naturally 'pack' animals. When placed in a human family environment, the dog perceives the family as its 'pack'. A change to the family situation disrupts and upsets the hierarchy of the dog’s perception of where/how it fits into the structure of the 'pack'. These changes can include a reduction in the family such as marital separation, death or family members moving away. Alternatively, the changes may be a result of expansion to the family ie marriage, partner moving in, children returning home, taking in boarders, and especially when a new baby arrives in the family. The dog may see new arrivals to the family unit as a threat to the dog's perception of its position and dominance in the 'pack' resulting in aggressive behaviour and resentment towards the new family members. The dog owner will need to take firm but loving action to deal with any displays of resentment and aggression in the dog so that the dog can understand and learn to accept the family addition and the dog’s new position in the 'pack'. When there is a decrease in the family for whatever reason, this can cause confusion and insecurity within the dog resulting in what humans may determine as behavioural problems. People understand that during marital separation, when family members move away or there is a death in the family the other family members grieve and feel the loss of that member. Likewise, the family dog will also feel the loss and will mourn for the missing family member. Dogs can bark, howl and whimper as a way of dealing with the loss of one of the dog's 'pack' members. The way humans react to changes can directly affect the behaviour of their pets. In times of family reduction, the family pet will require comforting and reassuring.</td>
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| Moving house       | When families move house, it causes a time of upheaval, stress and insecurity. A period of time is required for the re-adjustment into a new house and new neighbourhood. Dogs are territorial creatures and when they are removed for their home territory, they can become insecure and stressed resulting in several behavioural problems. The dog may try to jump the fence or dig out in an attempt to find its way back to its own territory. The dog may also bark and howl in its distress and insecurity.  
Humans base their home on the place they live and keep their possessions. A dog's territory is based on the area that the dog has claimed as its own by scent-marking landmarks to define the dog's territory. When a family moves home it cannot be assumed that a kennel placed in the back yard will be accepted as the dog's new home. All of the landmarks that have been scent marked by the dog have been taken away from the dog. Until the dog can re-establish a new home territory that it can claim for itself, the dog may be insecure and may display unsettled behaviour. When moving house, the dog owner needs to comfort, reassure and assist the dog in establishing its new territorial home. |

**Training techniques**

Owners need to teach their dogs what is or it not acceptable barking. This learning process can be time consuming, and persistence is required to achieve successful results. There are various ways of training dogs and devices can be purchased to assist in the discipline of dogs. One simple inexpensive method well worth trying and persisting with involves the use of voice control and water spray gun. When the dog is barking at the birds, cats, possums or neighbours, the owner should go to the dog whilst it is barking and squirt it in the face with the water saying whilst spraying the dog “NO, BAD DOG” in a firm but controlled voice. The owner should never call the dog to them to receive the reprimand or else it will believe that it is being reprimanded for coming to the owner when called. A dog should never be reprimanded after the incident as this confuses the dog as to why it is being punished.
Nuisance Barking

Possible further steps to prevent recurrence of nuisance barking –

- Provide your dog with quality exercise daily. Contact Domestic Animal Services or visit an ACT Government Shop front for information on off-lead exercise areas in your Suburb. Barking often indicates boredom.
- Provide stimulation for the dog such as bones, smart toys or chew toys;
- Screen area that may be inciting dog to bark. e.g., consider screening off the dogs view of passing traffic or pedestrians with solid fencing, lattice or shrubs;
- Contain dog within the house or garage at times when the dog is most likely to bark. E.g., if your dog barks at night when you are absent place your dog inside your residence.
- Buy an approved barking control collar i.e. Citronella collars or jet blast. It is illegal to use electrical or shock collars on dogs under the Animal Welfare Act
- Enrol dog into, and complete, a behaviour modification course. There are several businesses that specialise in behaviour modification, look in the Yellow pages under “Dog Training”