

MASTER BUILDERS

ROMINA DE SANTIS, technical adviser at Master Builders WA, answers your questions about home building



THE QUESTION

We have moved into our new home in a new subdivision and are one of the first in this stage. We have been putting up with debris on the road, contractor vehicles parked up and down the street and general disruption that construction sites bring, but we are getting a little tired of the noise. I am home most of the day and really look forward to the afternoon when they disappear for another day. Now they are arriving earlier and leaving later. I know there are rules for construction site noise. What do I do to lodge a complaint?

THE ANSWER

As the days become longer and the weather warmer, construction noise starting before 7am is more likely, and can cause distress for neighbours when contractors insist on arriving to site early and undertake work that requires the use of power tools, general noisy activities or switching on their radios.

This is particularly difficult if you are one of the first homes on the street to be completed in a new subdivision, but equally difficult on a quiet and established street in suburbia when everyone is used to the peace, and not appreciative of the material drop-offs, contractor vehicles, and other inevitable interruptions that building a home or undertaking renovations bring. But remember, all the homes on the street were once construction sites, so there also needs to be a level of tolerance so the project can finally be completed.

It is not an offence to start work on a site before 7am, only making unacceptable levels of noise. Unfortunately, painters are probably the only safe trade to be on-site before 7am.

Before you ring the council to complain, ring the site supervisor or the builder direct and follow up with an email or letter.

Often they are unaware what time their contractors are on site as they are not generally company employees, but independent contractors.

The builder's contact details are listed on the building signage on the site.

As the builder is responsible for the site, he or she can order the on-site contractors to comply with regulations and local by-laws.

Most builders appreciate the value of word-of-mouth reputation and would be anxious to maintain a good relationship with neighbours who may be their future clients.

If the noise before 7am on Sundays or public holidays continues, you have no choice but to lodge a complaint with the council.

You will need to visit your local council's website for more information, but it is generally Environmental Health Services who deals with noise complaints. It is likely you will need to put your complaint in writing.

For more information about building, visit the Master Builders A-Z Building Information Directory at www.mbawa.com. If you have any questions about home building or purchase issues, email romina@mbawa.com

A BUILDING INDUSTRY CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

With this being the last edition of HOME for the year, Master Builders director Michael McLean reports on what builders would like to receive in their stockings this Christmas.

- It has been another tough year for most homebuilders in WA.
- This harsh reality is mainly due to the fact that our population growth has fallen below one per cent per annum, investment in property developments is relatively low and demand for new dwellings is more than 4000 below our 10-year average.
- Although the housing industry is structurally strong and stable, there are a number of things that would enhance its efficiency and make builders feel as if their Christmas wishes had been granted.
- Each gift that WA builders would like to tick off their wish lists would ultimately benefit prospective homebuyers and investors in the property market.
- Here are 10 things Santa might be asked to deliver to our builders on December 25:
1. A more efficient planning approvals process for new homes and multi-unit developments with greater transparency and accountability. This would speed up building permits being issued, reduce costs and make everyone happier.
 2. Greater consistency across local government councils, especially in the metropolitan area. It is frustrating and nonsensical to have so many differences in building requirements from one metropolitan council to another.
 3. The retention of the \$10,000 First Home Owner Grant (FHOG) in the 2018 State Budget with a \$5000 boost in regions like Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Broome that are doing it tough at the moment.
 4. An overhaul of WA's housing indemnity insurance scheme to make it more sustainable from a regulator's perspective, less costly to homebuyers and more equitable to builders.
 5. A fairer distribution of the GST to WA. This would assist the State Government to provide more expenditure on infrastructure and create more jobs.
 6. A sensible range of recommendations from the review of our industrial

- relations system that recognises the importance of small business and the benefits of the sub-contract system to the housing industry.
7. An extension of the 0.2 per cent Construction Training Fund levy to all construction projects over \$40,000 in WA. This will help boost the training of local apprentices.
 8. The introduction of a sensible occupational health and safety regime following the current review of existing legislation. Simply raising penalties for safety breaches won't work. Making everyone responsible for their own safety will help.
 9. The introduction of innovative housing designs and partnerships with the private sector to help boost the building of more homes for the homeless and needy. This is important if our society is to help those less fortunate and to avoid future social disharmony.
 10. Stable government and effective leadership to implement sensible policies that will strengthen our economy, boost employment and grow wealth. Employers and society generally need governments to set and maintain appropriate laws and a regulatory environment to enable the private sector to thrive and not be hindered unreasonably.

Each of these gifts would help create a stronger housing industry which, in turn would create a stronger economy.

As the festive season is a time for giving, I hope each of our three layers of government will look seriously at how they can help make the state's second largest industry sector more efficient and productive in 2018.

If the right presents are delivered by Santa, the housing industry and homebuyers will definitely have a better year next year.

May you and your family enjoy a safe and happy time over the forthcoming festive season.

