

No Escape for Some

The closeness of units in residential villages prevents some downwind residents from being able to avoid breathing smoke when an upwind neighbour burns mosquito coils.

In the Fraser Coast region, for example, during the warmer months the prevailing wind for more than 80% of the time is from the two eastern quadrants, with the wind being mostly easterly to south-easterly.

Thus in towns such as Hervey Bay, village residents are forced to breathe smoke nearly all of the time when the neighbour in the adjacent upwind unit is burning mosquito coils, particularly in east-west duplex units where there is insufficient space for the smoke to be able to disperse quickly.

Behavioural Issues

It is easy to understand how burning mosquito coils all the time when there are no mosquitoes can reinforce a belief that mosquito coils are a very effective method of preventing mosquito bites.

Smoke from mosquito coils creates health hazards (see below). It appears that few residential villages are willing to accept this fact, and most resist doing anything about it. This may be partly due to general ignorance, and partly due to the burning of mosquito coils being a deeply ingrained pattern of behaviour for some people.

People who are seeking a unit in a residential village in Queensland need to be aware that there is a high risk that they could choose a village that allows residents to poison their neighbours with smoke from mosquito coils for several months of each year.

A residential unit can be downwind in close proximity to a

Better Solutions

In retirement villages, many units are joined together in duplex pairs, standalone units are mostly close to each other, and some units are joined together in terraces.

In lifestyle villages, the units are physically separate from each other but are usually densely packed together.

In both types of residential village, mosquito coil smoke simply shifts any mosquitoes from one residence to another.

Smoke repels mosquitoes, but only from the smoky area immediately downwind of the mosquito coil. If there are any mosquitoes present, then they just move in all directions out of the smoke. Most if not all of the mosquitoes will remain in the village.

Burning a mosquito coil might make it less likely that one resident will be bitten by mosquitoes, but then some other resident will become more likely to be bitten.

Only a relatively small proportion of residents burn mosquito coils. Unless coils are burned simultaneously by a high proportion of the residents in a village, the smoke cannot significantly reduce the number of mosquitoes in the village. The practice of burning mosquito coils in a residential village therefore provides little or no overall anti-mosquito benefit for the village.

Residents who claim to rely on mosquito coils consider themselves to be unprotected from mosquito bites when coils are not being burned. To be considered effective, the coils have to be burned continuously all day long.

Consequently, the smoke nuisance from mosquito coils is continuously present all day long.

Summarising the effects of burning mosquito coils in a residential village, the coils do not substantially reduce

neighbour who burns mosquito coils all day every day, seven days a week, even when there are no mosquitoes. At the time of writing (in 2024), most villages appear to treat this sort of behaviour as being perfectly acceptable.

Mosquito coils are usually burned outdoors.

Some mosquito coil users may simply not be aware that the smoke creates health hazards. They might not even be aware that the smoke causes a nuisance to others.

There may be some inconsiderate people who insist on burning mosquito coils even though they know that they are causing unpleasant problems for people downwind.

It is suspected that mosquito coils are sometimes burned as a legitimate way to deliberately cause a nuisance to a downwind neighbour.

Most peculiarly, it has happened that a resident obtained advice from their doctor to burn mosquito coils. This hazardous quackery appears to have overridden all common sense. It provided justification for burning mosquito coils all day every day, even though the smoke destroyed the quality of life for the downwind neighbour.

Health Hazards

It is a scientific fact that passive tobacco smoking causes health hazards. Although smoke from mosquito coils has not been studied to the same extent as tobacco smoke, there is evidence that mosquito coil smoke is hazardous.

Smoke from mosquito coils can be physically irritating and psychologically irritating, can cause bronchial issues, can aggravate existing bronchial issues such as asthma, can induce headaches, and appears to be carcinogenic.

Asthma triggers are different for different people. [Asthma Australia](#) says that *"Each person can have different reactions to different triggers. Some triggers are avoidable, like cigarette smoke or perfumes, while others are more difficult to avoid, such as weather changes and pollen."*

"Wood heater, woodfire and bushfire smoke contain fine particulate matter. These particles are tiny in size and when inhaled can go deep into your lungs, causing inflammation. The particles can also enter your

the overall number of mosquitoes so they probably do not reduce the overall number of bites, some residents burn coils all day long which creates smoke all day long, other residents cannot escape from the smoke, which can be an unpleasant nuisance and causes health hazards for those who are forced to breathe it, and coils are burned even when there are no mosquitoes.

The evidence is overwhelming that mosquito coils are an inappropriate method of preventing mosquito bites in residential villages. Perhaps "appalling" might well be a more accurate description than "inappropriate".

Thanks to modern anti-mosquito measures, in many places mosquito coils are unnecessary for most of the time because for most of the time there are few if any mosquitoes. In any case, at all times mosquito coils are fundamentally unnecessary because there are better ways to prevent mosquito bites.

A good example of a preventative measure that is more effective than mosquito coils, and that causes no harm to other people, is wearing clothes that prevent mosquito bites. Another good example is mosquito repellent.

Ultrasonic mosquito repellers are another good example. Many people find them very effective. These inexpensive battery-powered devices repel mosquitoes by emitting high frequency sounds that human ears cannot hear.

An effective method for reducing mosquito numbers is by adding special chemicals to standing water. These prevent mosquitoes from breeding and do not harm other wildlife.

A fly swatter is the most environmentally-friendly method of zapping mosquitoes.

Antiquated Laws

Legislation: The Retirement Villages Act (Queensland 1999) states that residents must not unreasonably interfere, or unreasonably cause or permit interference, with the peace, comfort or privacy of other residents.

Repeatedly creating smoke that causes a nuisance and health hazards to neighbours is clearly a breach of this

bloodstream, which can affect other parts of the body like the heart and immune systems."

Mosquito coils appear to be made from wood products, so smoke from mosquito coils must be an asthma hazard.

There are also other hazards because smoke particles can travel from the lungs and cause inflammation elsewhere.

Asthma Australia does not appear to be aware that smoke from mosquito coils is endemic in residential villages in Queensland, and that some residents are unable to avoid breathing the smoke.

The fragrances that are added to mosquito coils create additional hazards.

Limonene, an aromatic oil derived from citrus fruits, is commonly used in mosquito coils. When limonene is burned, one of the combustion products is formaldehyde which is a carcinogen.

Mosquito coils may contain phthalates which prolong the action of fragrances. Phthalates are endocrine disruptors.

[Scientific studies on perfumes](#) have shown "*that phthalates, aldehydes, parabens and aluminium-based salts are the most important contaminants in aromatic products that cause side effects such as allergies, breast cancer, reproductive disorders, especially in males, skin allergies, nervous system damage and migraine headaches for consumers.*"

[Air pollution is responsible for 3% of dementia cases.](#)

Mosquito coils belong to a bygone era of widely-spaced houses, cigarette smoking and ignorance about the dangers of passive smoking.

Yet, still today, some people like to burn mosquito coils all day long every day, even when there are no mosquitoes, creating a chronic nuisance and health hazard for their unfortunate downwind neighbours. The smoke nuisance is often much greater than any mosquito nuisance could be.

Although most people are aware that tobacco smoke is hazardous, many people seem to be unaware that mosquito coil smoke is also hazardous.

Smoke pollution from mosquito coils should probably be considered to be more hazardous than passive cigarette smoking, because mosquito coils are burned continuously for a full sixty minutes per hour rather than only for the ten or fifteen minutes per hour that a heavy smoker

law. Negligently, where smoke is concerned, this law rarely ever appears to be enforced.

Similarly to noise pollution, air pollution is a contentious issue. Some people don't seem to mind smoke pollution, whereas others cannot tolerate excessive smoke.

Most residential villages in Queensland have rules that restrict how much noise a resident can make. But oddly, for smoke pollution there are usually no restrictions, other than some sort of vague and ineffectual rule that tobacco smokers should be mindful of other residents.

What about mosquito coils, incinerators and fish smokers? In Queensland some villages also have firepits for communal use, sometimes situated on the upwind side of the village.

Mosquito coils are widely used. Smoke from mosquito coils creates a nuisance and health hazards. Yet mosquito coils are not specifically mentioned in any legislation. There is a need for reform of the current laws relating to all types of smoke pollution in Queensland.

Common Law: In many countries, it is now accepted that passive tobacco smoking is a health hazard. In contrast, in Queensland the established common law appears to be that an "ordinary person" would never find that cigarette smoke constitutes an "unreasonable interference", nomatter what circumstances exist such as the most prevalent direction of the wind and how much of the time that there is smoke and whether there is any necessity for the smoke.

Despite a progressive marginalisation of tobacco smoking in most parts of the world, in Queensland the laws relating to smoke nuisance have not kept pace with what is generally accepted to be in the public interest.

Nevertheless, the tide in Queensland may have started to turn. In 2021, an Adjudicator for the Office of the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management barred a unit holder at Artique Resort, Surfers Paradise, from smoking tobacco products on their balcony after a complaint from another unit holder.

In this landmark case the Adjudicator introduced to Queensland a concept that had previously been adopted in New South Wales, the concept being that tobacco smoke is always a hazard because there is no safe level of exposure to it.

In Queensland before this ruling, any court-imposed

might smoke cigarettes.

There does not appear to be any justification for treating smoke from mosquito coils less seriously than tobacco smoke.

Because of the nuisance and health hazards, failure to restrict the burning of mosquito coils in a residential village is undoubtedly negligence of a high order.

prohibition on smoking at a residence would have been unthinkable.

Although the Artique case involved a strata title scheme, which is governed by a different law from residential villages, it seems likely that prohibitions on smoke pollution will eventually become normal in all types of close-proximity residential communities including retirement villages and lifestyle villages.

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