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Youth advocates call for ban or tight regulation of ultrasonic teenage deterrent

An ultrasonic device advertised by manufacturers as 'the solution to the eternal problem of unwanted gatherings of teenagers' has been installed on the outside of a Melbourne suburban shop and is being considered by police and local councils in Queensland.

The device known as the Mosquito emits a high pitched sound and can only be heard by those under 25 years of age. It is already in use in Scotland and England where it is used by shopkeepers and in shopping centres, malls and parks.

In Scotland and the UK there has been widespread community opposition to the device. Children's Commissioner for England Sir Albert Aynsley-Green has called for a ban on the device. Despite this opposition and concern an estimated 3,500 devices have already been installed in England without regulation.

"We should heed the warnings from the UK and either ban the device or introduce tight regulations on its use" said Ariel Couchman Director of Youthlaw today. "We call on the Victorian Government to anticipate the take up of this device and immediately introduce regulation of its use"

Effectively it is treating under 25 year olds as second class citizens. How would the community feel if a device was used against old people or one race "?

"Young people are citizens and have a right to be consumers and to enjoy public space the same as anyone else. Young people use public space to a greater extent than many other sections of the community. "

"We remind the government that it has only recently enacted its Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities which provides that all people have a right to move freely within Victoria"

"All gatherings of young people are being demonised as anti-social behaviour gangs. The use of the Mosquito will only reinforce ill-informed and prejudiced views in our society about teenagers. Teenagers play an important role in the community and are tomorrow's leaders. This device sends a message to our teenagers that they are not valued.

"The inventor of the device Howard Stapleton has himself raised the issue that the device may not be legal and has called for the device to be used sparingly ".

"We are also concerned about the impact on other vulnerable members of the community who may be affected by the device including babies, children, toddlers, autistic children and disabled children".

"We applaud the Australian Retailers' Association who recently opposed the introduction of the device saying that it is short-sighted to deter young people and that these sorts of Big Brother, draconian methods of deterring people from coming to your store is just a little bit off the tree".

Youthlaw calls on the government to introduce tight regulation of the device differentiating between its use by individual shopkeepers and its use to diminish access by young people to public spaces.

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