

MEDIA RELEASE

Leading health organisations unite behind e-cigarette reforms protecting young Australians

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Australia's leading health organisations stand together in welcoming vital new legislation, that with the support of the Australian Parliament, will reduce the devastating harm that e-cigarettes are having on our communities, children and young people.

More than ten organisations, including Cancer Council, the Australian Medical Association, Public Health Association, Lung Foundation Australia and Heart Foundation, all strongly support these measures, aimed at preventing non-prescription e-cigarettes from being freely available, as well as strengthening and streamlining the current prescription pathway.

The widespread support from the medical and public health sector comes as AIHW data shows that nearly 60% of current e-cigarettes users are under 30. Most concerningly of all, over 60% of 15–24-year-olds had never smoked when they started vaping. By comparison, just 10% of users are over 50.

“Children and young people are quite clearly not vaping to quit smoking. In fact, they're around three times more likely to take up tobacco smoking compared to young Australians who have never vaped. E-cigarettes are not safe and can cause harm like addiction, poisoning, acute nicotine toxicity and lung injury; the significance of these are not to be underestimated,” warns Lung Foundation Australia CEO Mark Brooke.

Whilst vaping use has increased significantly, public health and medical experts point to the evidence that measures introduced today alongside the import ban on non-prescription, disposable vapes can help change this trajectory.

“We've been missing the essential enforcement mechanisms that help authorities crackdown on illegal sales and manufacturing. Current use of e-cigarettes amongst Australians aged 14 and over has nearly tripled between 2019 and 2023. A new generation is becoming addicted to nicotine,” explains Alecia Brooks, Chair of Cancer Council's Tobacco Issues Committee.

“This bill is the final piece of the puzzle, and puts an end date on the Australian manufacture, advertisement, supply and commercial possession of any non-prescription vapes. Kids will no longer be able to walk into their local convenience store, chicken shop or tobacconist and buy cheap, brightly coloured, fruity flavoured vapes on their way home from school,” Ms Brooks adds.

Medical experts also welcome changes that will facilitate smoother access to e-cigarettes, for people who believe they may benefit from using e-cigarettes to help them quit smoking under the care of a health professional.

“E-cigarettes are a huge health problem and we call on the Parliament to heed the unified call of the health sector and pass this legislation. Importantly, patients will be able to turn to their GP for help to quit this very unhealthy habit, with advice on proven cessation methods and the option for a prescription where this is clinically appropriate,” explains Professor Steve Robson, President of the Australian Medical Association.

VicHealth CEO, Dr Sandro Demaio said this legislation is a critical step in protecting future generations of Australians from the harms of tobacco and nicotine.

"This legislation highlights the urgency required to protect young people from e-cigarettes, which are specifically designed to appeal to young people and threaten to unravel decades of Australia's hard work in tobacco control."

Terry Slevin, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia urges all Members of Parliament to use this opportunity to safeguard the health of young Australians.

"The multinational tobacco and vaping industries will stop at nothing to prevent this legislation succeeding. The eyes of the world will be on Australia if this bill passes. We expect it will enormously reduce vaping, which will put a hole in their profits, not only here, but in every country that follows.

"Commercial vested interests and their fellow travellers should be recognised for what they are, and their views set aside appropriately."

"The 'Scream Test' has always been the best yardstick for tobacco control policy. The screaming of the vaping industry assures us that this government's actions will hurt their bottom line, and so help enormously the health of future generations of children in Australia."

-ENDS-

Contact details

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:
Cancer Council Australia, media@cancer.org.au
02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

The team can connect you to the relevant organisation's spokesperson.

About the laws

The proposed changes will:

- Stop the access and supply of all single use, disposable vapes, strengthening and reinforcing the prescription pathway.
- Halt the domestic manufacture, advertising, supply, or commercial possession of non-prescription and disposable vapes.

Organisations united in support

