

April 2024

# Position Statement

## E-cigarettes



### Vision

Mob should have every opportunity to be healthy and strong. This means reducing the use of smoking and vaping in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Victoria. Research shows a correlation between vaping and increased likelihood of smoking uptake.

VACCHO asserts that the design, flavours and look of e-cigarettes must be changed so they do not appeal to children and young people. Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are devices that heat a liquid into an aerosol, which is inhaled (Quit Victoria, 2024). The usage of e-cigarettes is frequently referred to as vaping. Tighter regulations are necessary to protect our children and young people from marketing of e-cigarettes through social media platforms and influencers.

### Recommendations

#### RECOMMENDATION 1:

The Victorian Government should match the commitment of the Commonwealth Government to meet anticipated demands of smoking and vaping cessation support by increasing funding to develop and grow the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) workforce to support reduction in vaping and smoking

#### RECOMMENDATION 2:

All Government should take urgent action to increase and tighten regulations to ban direct and indirect promotion of e-cigarettes on social media.

#### RECOMMENDATION 3:

The Victorian and Federal Government should increase funding for research on the harms of nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems, and evidence-based approaches to reduce vaping.

## Background and Evidence

E-cigarettes are relatively new products. E-cigarettes are not approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and have not been tested for their safety and efficacy (Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, 2022), which poses risks to the health and safety of people who use them. Vaping rates have increased over the past decade from 8.8% in 2016 to 11.3% in 2019 (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2022).

A recent report from December 2023, showed that in 2017, 13.6% Australian secondary school aged children reported 'ever vaping' which increased in 2022/2023 to nearly 30%. Of concern is that the proportion of students reporting 'ever smoking and vaping' also increased from 8.4% in 2017 to 12.3% in 2022/2023 (Scully, M, Bain, E, Koh, I, Wakefield, M, Durkin, S, 2023,).

Although the extent of the long-term health effects associated with the use of these products is not well understood, evidence shows that e-cigarettes are harmful, including:

- Over 200 chemicals have been found in e-cigarettes including chemicals which are known to cause cancer (Winnall, WR, et. al, 2023; Quit Victoria, 2024)
- Most e-cigarettes sold as nicotine-free products contain nicotine (Quit Victoria, 2023; Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023)
- Nicotine can impair memory, concentration and affect brain development in young people (Quit Victoria, 2024)
- People who vape are three times more likely to start smoking cigarettes compared to people who don't vape (Banks E, Beckwith K, Joshy G, 2020; Banks, E, et.al, 2022).
- Using nicotine e-cigarettes increases the risk of nicotine dependence, poisoning and overdose (Banks E, Beckwith K, Joshy G, 2020; Banks, E, et.al, 2022)
- Vaping can increase the risk of respiratory diseases known as 'E-cigarette or Vaping Use- Associated Lung Injury (EVALI) among people who smoke and people who don't smoke cigarettes (Banks, E, et.al, 2022)
- Vaping in pregnancy might be harmful with adverse effects on pregnancy outcomes such as low birth weight (Winnall, W, et al. 2023)

Around 50% of Aboriginal Australians are under the age of 18 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). E-cigarettes are marketed to appeal to young people by using modern designs including devices that look like USBs and pens, colourful packaging, and sweet or fruity flavours (Greenhalgh, E, Scollo, M, 2021) such as watermelon, bubble gum and fairy floss.

E-cigarette companies use social media influences to promote vaping to youth with a lack of health warnings associated with use. (Smith, M, et al. ,2023; Vassey J, Valente T, Barker J, et al. , 2021). In addition, the tobacco industry has a strong connection to e-cigarettes which is of concern (Greenhalgh, E, et al. 2021).

Additionally, the Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP) guidelines state that nicotine vaping products are not a first line smoking cessation treatment for people who want to quit smoking. Concerns about e-cigarettes in the RACGP Guidelines, 2021, include:

- lack of evidence around safety
- e-cigarettes acting as a gateway to tobacco use
- intentional and accidental poisoning, burns and lung injury
- continued use with smoking (dual use)
- potential to promote nicotine use and renormalise smoking among non-smokers, especially young people.

## Government Action on E-Cigarettes and Vaping

The Commonwealth Health Minister, Mark Butler MP, announced that the proposed e-cigarette reforms will be rolled out over 2024. The proposed ban on the general retail sale of e-cigarettes will ensure that these products can only be accessed through pharmacies, with a prescription.

VACCHO welcomes these measures, but is concerned that many people, including those under the age of 18, will still have access to non-prescription e-cigarettes through an illegal market, which will require further government action. Further action will be required to regulate promotion and messaging of e-cigarettes on social media. Additionally, to meet anticipated demands of smoking and vaping cessation support, we call on the Victorian Government to commit to and provide additional funding to develop and grow the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation workforce.



## References

Quit Victoria, 2024, *Electronic cigarettes*, viewed April 2024:

<https://www.quit.org.au/articles/teenvaping/> <https://www.quit.org.au/policy-advocacy/electronic-cigarettes>

Scully, M, Bain, E ,Koh, I ,Wakefield, M ,Durkin, S, 2023, Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco and e-cigarettes, Cancer Council Vic, viewed April 2024, <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/secondary-school-students-use-of-tobacco-and-e-cigarettes-2022-2023.pdf>

Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, Therapeutic Goods Administration, 2022, *Nicotine vaping products: Information for prescribers*, viewed June 2023; <https://www.tga.gov.au/resources/resource/guidance/nicotine-vaping-products-information-prescribers>

National Health and Medical Research Council, (2022) *2022 CEO Statement on Electronic Cigarettes*, Retrieved from National Health and Medical Research Council, viewed April 2023; <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/all-topics/electronic-cigarettes/ceo-statement>

Winnall, W, Greenhalgh, E, Bayly, M and Scollo, M, 2023, 'Chemicals in e-liquids and e-cigarette aerosols', Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, viewed March 2024, <https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-5-chemicals-in-e-liquids-and-e-cigarette-aerosols>

Quit Victoria, 2024 , *Vapes: General information*, viewed April 2024: <https://www.quit.org.au/articles/e-cigarettes-general-information>

Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, 2023, *About e-cigarettes*, viewed April 2023: <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/smoking-and-tobacco/about-smoking-and-tobacco/about-e-cigarettes>

Banks E, Beckwith K, Joshy G, 2020, 'Summary report on use of e-cigarettes and impact on tobacco smoking uptake and cessation, relevant to the Australian context' Commissioned Report for the Australian Government Department of Health, viewed May 2023, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/211618>

Banks, E, et.al, 2022 ' Electronic cigarettes and health outcomes: systematic review of global evidence' Commissioned Report for the Australian Government Department of Health, viewed May 2023,

[https://nceph.anu.edu.au/research/projects/health-impacts-electronic-cigarettes#health\\_outcomes](https://nceph.anu.edu.au/research/projects/health-impacts-electronic-cigarettes#health_outcomes)

Winnall, W, Greenhalgh, E, Scollo, M, 2023, 'Health effects of e-cigarette use during pregnancy', Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, viewed March 2023, :

<https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-6-the-health-effects-of-e-cigarette-use/18-6-1-health-effects-of-e-cigarette-use-during-pregnancy>

Mescolo, F, Ferrante, G, La Grutta, S, 2021, 'Effects of E-Cigarette Exposure on Prenatal Life and Childhood Respiratory Health: A Review of Current Evidence', *PubMed Central*, viewed June 2023,

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8430837/>

Greenhalgh, E, & Scollo, M , 2022, 'Effects of e-cigarette use on smoking', Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, viewed March 2023,;

<https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-7-effects-of-e-cigarette-use-on-smoking#x18.7.1>

Greenhalgh, E, Scollo, M, 2021, 'Advertising and promotion of e-cigarettes', Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues, viewed May 2023,

<https://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-18-e-cigarettes/18-2-advertising-and-promotion>

Smith, M, et al. ,2023, 'User-generated content and influencer marketing involving e-cigarettes on social media: a scoping review and content analysis of YouTube and Instagram', *PMC Public Health*, viewed,

<https://bmcpublikealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-15389-1>

Vassey J, Valente T, Barker J, et al. ,2021, E-cigarette brands and social media influencers on Instagram: a social network analysis, *BMJ Journal*, viewed June 2023,

<https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2022/02/06/tobaccocontrol-2021-057053>

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (2021) *Supporting smoking cessation: A guide for health professionals*, viewed January 2023, <https://www.racgp.org.au/clinical-resources/clinical-guidelines/key-racgp-guidelines/view-all-racgp-guidelines/supporting-smoking-cessation/pharmacotherapy-for-smoking-cessation>

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022, *Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary*, viewed January 2023, <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/australia-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary#:~:text=In%202021%2C%2051.1%25%20of%20Aboriginal,down%20from%2055.2%25%20in%202011.>

Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care, 2022, *Consultation: Proposed reforms to the regulation of nicotine vaping products*, viewed November 2023, <https://www.tga.gov.au/resources/consultation/consultation-proposed-reforms-regulation-nicotine-vaping-products>