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## Only four GPs in Geelong region authorised by TGA to prescribe nicotine vapes

A “grossly insufficient” number of doctors in the Geelong region are authorised to prescribe nicotine vapes, sparking concern this will fuel the black market.

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Experts are concerned a shortage of Geelong GPs authorised to prescribe nicotine vapes will lead to an increase in black market sales.

Only four general practitioners (GPs) in Greater Geelong are able to prescribe [nicotine vapes](#) to local smokers wanting to quit cigarettes, sparking concern this will drive sales on the [black market](#).

The doctors, located in Waurin Ponds, Geelong, Grovedale and Highton, are authorised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), and have opted for their details to be public, to prescribe non-approved nicotine [vaping products](#) which are used as a smoking cessation tool.

No nicotine vapes are currently approved by the TGA but consumers who hold a valid prescription can legally purchase non-approved nicotine vapes at a pharmacy or online retailer.

The sale and possession of nicotine vapes without a prescription has been illegal in Australia since October 2021.

In May this year, Federal Health Minister Mark Butler pledged \$737 million to introduce measures to crackdown on the vaping black market, including allowing all GPs to prescribe nicotine vapes without authorisation from the TGA.

But this change is yet to come into effect.



IGET Bars, which come in a variety of sweet and fruity flavours, are illegal to purchase.

From the Fields Pharmaceutical manufactures nicotine vapes to be used as smoking cessation tools.

Chief executive Wilhelm David said it was “grossly insufficient” that only four GPs in the Geelong region were able to prescribe nicotine vapes.

“To create a safe pathway for Geelong smokers to quit, they must have access to local GPs who are able to prescribe Australian standard products,” he said.

“If people can’t access (legal nicotine vapes), they will either turn to the vaping black market, with all its risks, or simply keep smoking.”

The vaping black market includes products sold at convenience stores and tobacconists.

Mr David said black market vapes are often “poor quality” and inaccurately labelled.

“Vaping products bought illegally are dangerous,” he said.



From the Fields Pharmaceutical chief executive Wilhelm David. Picture: Supplied

“They contain all sorts of nasties.”

Mr David said vaping was a “credible and sustainable smoking cessation tool”.

“For those wanting to quit smoking, this is a pathway that actually works,” he said.



Western Victoria Primary Health Network clinical spokeswoman and local GP, Dr Anne Stephenson, said all doctors could help people quit smoking and vaping should only be considered after other approved methods, such as nicotine patches.

“While nicotine vaping products may help people stop smoking, the evidence of the

effectiveness of vaping in helping people quit smoking is mixed,” she said.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners president Dr Nicole Higgins, said it was important for patients to have access to GPs who could prescribe nicotine vaping products as a smoking cessation strategy.

“The last thing we want is for people to turn to the black market,” she said.

“It is far preferable for them to have a consult with a GP and discuss how best to quit smoking.”



RACGP president Dr Nicole Higgins.  
Picture: Supplied



Quit Victoria acting director Craig Sinclair. Picture: Maya Sugiharto

Quit Victoria acting director Craig Sinclair said the effectiveness of vaping in smoking cessation was still emerging.

“Using nicotine e-cigarettes under medical supervision may be helpful for some people who smoke as a last resort to quit,” he said.

The Geelong Advertiser reported earlier this year that sweet and fruity flavoured vapes sold illegal at stores in the CBD were getting [youth’s hooked on nicotine](#).

While some vapes can be bought legally without nicotine, some products can contain as much as 50mg of nicotine, the same amount as a pack of cigarettes.

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