



Media Statement

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Experts say prescribing GP shortage will inflare vaping black-market

Smoking cessation experts, The Quit Collective, say a nation-wide shortage of GPs able to prescribe nicotine vaping products (NVPs) to local smokers, is driving people to purchase dangerously inferior vape products from the black-market.

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

In May this year, Federal Health Minister Mark Butler pledged \$737 million to fund measures to crackdown on Australia's vaping market.

However, according to The Quit Collective's Dr Carolyn Beaumont, the Government's proposed vaping reforms still have some issues.

"We know that vaping is a credible and sustainable smoking cessation tool. So, for those wanting to quit smoking, this is a pathway that actually works," Dr Beaumont said.

"But people wanting to quit smoking still need access to a GP, and that remains a huge barrier. There are cost issues, availability issues and also geographical issues.

"Until we have some approved vapes registered with the TGA, doctors are going to remain unwilling to prescribe and that will keep driving people towards black market vapes," said Dr Beaumont.

The Quit Collective estimates between 5.5 and 6 million vape units are sold each month in Australia, with at least half of those purchased on the black-market.

Dr Beaumont said the current black market includes tobacconists and convenience stores who are selling these products under the counter, often to young and unknowing Australians.

"The truth is, vaping products bought illegally are dangerous, and smokers who are currently using black market vapes really need to find an Australian Standard vape," Dr Beaumont said.

"Black market vapes can have an expired shelf life, or out of date battery units which can leak into the vape fluid, causing explosions and even severe lung injury.

"The Australian Standard for vape products is important because it regulates the level of ingredients in these products, such as nicotine. Australian Standard products also include other safety features such as child resistant packaging.

"People may think they're getting a cheaper product or a better deal when buying from the black market, but that is just not the case.

"The reality is, although black market products are cheap to import, there is a huge mark-up on them so you can actually buy prescription quality vapes which are cheaper than the black market products," she said.



Dr Beaumont said the Federal Government’s blanket ban on vaping without a prescription would have every chance of succeeding as long as GPs Australia-wide participate in the prescription model.

“The bottom line is, to create a safe pathway for smokers to quit, they must have access to local GPs who are able to prescribe Australian Standard products.

“The time has come for the Government to have approved vapes. This is no different to having other approved medications. We have approved antibiotics, Panadol and other medications which we know the TGA has approved. It’s now time for that to happen for vapes,” said Dr Beaumont.

“Until that happens, GPs simply aren’t going to get on board with prescribing a product that could be a black-market product.

“The bottom line is, if the Government don’t approve these products and this issue of GP participation isn’t addressed, then the prescription model simply won’t work.

“If smokers can’t access Australian Standard products, they will either turn to the vaping black-market, with all its safety concerns, or they will just keep smoking.

“This is a serious public health issue.

“Our ultimate goal at The Quit Collective is to reduce the incidence of smoking-related death and disease, which remains the number one cause of mortality in Australia.

“Our aspirational target, like our government’s, is to reduce adult smoking numbers in Australia to 5%.

“We think this is achievable, as long as there are doctors willing and able to prescribe,” said Dr Beaumont.

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About The Quit Collective

The Quit Collective is a group of like-minded doctors, experts and telehealth professionals who believe vaping is a credible and sustainable smoking cessation tool.

Members of *The Quit Collective* may vary slightly on the approach to regulating vaping in Australia, but they share the common goal of eradicating combustible tobacco cigarettes due to the damage they cause to millions of adult Australians. All group members recognise the vital role vaping plays in making that a reality.

More details at <https://quitcollective.com.au/>