



Media Statement

Doctors urge peak bodies to act now on vaping or risk fuelling black market

For Immediate Release

10 July 2023

The Quit Collective, a group of like-minded doctors, experts and telehealth professionals, say the rampant black market for nicotine vaping products (NVP) across Australia will continue to thrive unless more doctors are able to write prescriptions to support their therapeutic use.

The Quit Collective has called on leading medical representative bodies, led by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and Australian Medical Association (AMA), to urgently release fresh guidance for prescribed nicotine vaping products to medical practitioners to best assist GPs and the profession.

Quit Collective spokesperson, Wayne Jones, said the Albanese Government's heavily publicised future measures around medically prescribed NVPs, outlined in April and funded in the May Federal Budget, required in-parallel adoption from Australian GPs and pharmacies.

Mr Jones said the future measures were a clear pointer for peak medical and pharmacy bodies to get on board the public health initiative anticipated to come into operation later this year.

"There are over 35,000 GPs in Australia but only just over 1900 are currently able to prescribe nicotine vaping products.

"This is despite the burning public health issue of an unregulated black market fuelled by poor quality and mislabelled vaping products made readily available to young Australians.

"The Federal Health Minister has said 1 in 20 Australian doctors are presently authorised to prescribe vapes and this low number needs to go up.

"If this issue isn't addressed by Australia's medical peak bodies, the Federal Government's prescription model, whenever it is finally implemented, won't effectively work.

"The peak bodies simply can't sit on the sidelines and watch the black market continue to sell 160,000 vapes a day, which is driving youth vaping rates to above 25% of teenagers.

"As with other major health measures, we implore these bodies to get on board and appropriately inform their members of the new environment around future retailing and consumption of therapeutic nicotine vaping products.

"GPs should be encouraged, not kept unnecessarily in the dark, to confidentially prescribe NVPs in the future to those who need them," Mr Jones said.



According to The Quit Collective, 2.6 million Australian smokers are relying on an enhanced prescription model for NVPs to work so they can try and join this pathway to quit smoking.

“From our perspective, if hundreds of thousands of smokers can’t easily access a doctor who can write them a nicotine prescription, they’ll be forced to resort to the black market and the prescription model for vapes will sadly fail,” Mr Jones said.

The Quit Collective’s Dr Carolyn Beaumont said it is particularly important that smokers in regional and rural areas are able to access prescriptions for nicotine vaping products.

“Smoking rates remain particularly high in regional and rural areas of Australia despite the great gains on reducing our national smoking rate. People smoke for a variety of complex reasons, and regional and rural communities are the most affected but have the least access to doctors.

“Two solutions to improve NVP script access are to increase the current Medicare rebate for smoking cessation consultations, which will encourage more doctors to bulk-bill these consults. Access to NVP-specific telehealth platforms may also address the difficulties of seeing a doctor in person.

“Many adult smokers need help to quit and we know that vaping can offer a less harmful pathway to stop tobacco smoking. Vaping may be needed short term or long term, depending on their individual circumstances.

“For example, they should continue to have seamless access to telehealth platforms to automatically prescribe a NVP to more easily assist their efforts to quit smoking.

“For the prescription model to succeed many more Australian GPs will need to be able to prescribe these products and they need access and guidance to do so.

“Unfortunately, if there aren’t enough doctors able to prescribe NVPs, thousands of everyday Australians won’t have access to them. They will either then turn to the vaping black market with all its complications or keep on smoking.

“The Federal Government announced its renewed support of the prescription model almost two months ago. Since then, some additional GPs have registered to prescribe nicotine vaping products. But this number must grow in order to support better public health outcomes, which is based on reducing smoking-related preventable death and disease.

“It is time to get moving and wipe out the nicotine black market to ensure only Australian Standard products are made available to those who need them,” Dr Beaumont said.

Contact:

Adi Stevens	Royce	0407 411 088	adi@royce.com.au
Richard Amos	Royce	0418 344 978	richard@royce.com.au



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.

The following Quit Collective Individuals are available for comment:

1. Wayne Jones, co-founder, From the Fields Pharmaceuticals and Best + Well – all in one cessation telehealth service
2. Dr Carolyn Beaumont, Medical Nicotine cessation service
3. Quit Hero, National smoking cessation telehealth service
4. Medigreen Dispensary & Clinic- Dr Charles Lisner, Dr Victor Goh, Dr Michael Best, Dr Bianca