



Media Statement

Doctors back Government's vaping reforms but say more must be done to bring down black market

For Immediate Release

30 May 2023

A group of like-minded doctors, experts and telehealth professionals, *The Quit Collective*, say the Albanese Government's crackdown on the vaping black market doesn't go far enough.

Whilst the Government has recognised vaping as having a legitimate therapeutic use in the right circumstances to help long-term smokers quit, they have raised concerns about the practical difficulties and inequalities for everyday Australians accessing nicotine prescriptions.

Under the proposed future laws, to legally obtain nicotine vaping products in Australia, you must be an adult with a prescription for the purposes of smoking cessation.

The current reality is that vaping products (including those containing nicotine and stated without) are widely available on the black market, predominantly sourced online or from local nonregulated retail stores. They are almost universally poor-quality disposable vapes that are mass produced overseas.

The Quit Collective's Wayne Jones says: "The Federal Government's intention to classify nicotine vapes and vaping products as therapeutic is absolutely the right move.

"The 2.6 million Australians who currently smoke are entitled to access the safest possible smoking cessation pathways, and this should involve medically prescribed vaping products.

"Currently, 10 per cent of the Australian adult population smoke. We too would like to see that number halved this decade in line with our public health targets. If we could help a further one million Australians to quit smoking, then we have done our job," Mr Jones said.

According to smoking cessation expert Dr Carolyn Beaumont: "Vaping is a far safer alternative to smoking and can be a useful and practical tool to help smokers quit. We have found vaping to be more effective than other nicotine replacement therapies in helping smokers sustainably quit in the long-term through their controlled use."

"Unlike traditional cigarettes, medically prescribed e-cigarettes are smoke free and generally tobacco free. They do not produce the 60+ cancerous chemicals in cigarettes, and are a vital tool in reducing the rates of smoking-related death and disease.



“Although we don’t yet have the necessary decades of evidence in regards to reduced rates of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease, there is already plenty of evidence that shows vaping (compared to smoking) reduces the severity of health conditions such as asthma and lung infections.

“Ex-smokers also often report improved mental health when they switch to vaping. Finally, the significant financial savings of vaping improves the standard of living for ex-smokers, many of whom struggle with complex medical conditions and are more likely to come from lower socio-economic areas,” she said.

Dr Beaumont said Australia still had far too many adults smoking, with our rates not declining as rapidly as countries such as New Zealand who have non-prescription vapes as well as stringent control on cigarette availability.

“We must act to reduce the vaping black market of poor quality disposable vapes, which is driving youth vaping uptake,” Dr Beaumont said.

“But of even greater importance is reducing smoking-related death and disease, which remains the number one cause of mortality in the world.

“We must remain proportionate in our response to vaping, and ensure those who need it can easily and legally access high quality vaping products without needing to resort to the black market.”

The Quit Collective, includes a number of Australian doctors who specialise in tobacco treatment, smoking cessation and nicotine addiction. They say both Federal and State Governments need to support the ban on unregulated disposable vapes, and ensure the prescription-only, pharmacy distributed model doesn’t create further barriers for ex-smokers seeking to switch to vaping.

According to Wayne Jones: “There is scope in the future for a non-prescription model available from a highly regulated retail universe, but the success of this model in reducing the black market depends upon having well-regulated Australian authorised vaping products that are reasonably priced and easily available for adults.

“The current black market is only perpetuating the problem. The fact that nicotine vaping products are so poorly and falsely labelled, are readily available despite the requirement for a GP prescription, and are ending up too freely in the hands of young people, is just dangerous,” Mr Jones said.

“These products are not regulated, many are simply not labelled correctly and the only way to regain control and ensure the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of Australians,



is to encourage and support the legitimate sale of nicotine vaping products by doctor's prescription.

"The Federal Government hasn't banned vaping. The new reforms will mean adults who are using nicotine vaping products in their quest to quit smoking, will now have a legitimate pathway through their GP, to access Australian Standard smoking cessation products. This is a win for public health.

According to *The Quit Collective*, vaping is a much safer alternative when appropriately prescribed, distributed and labelled.

"We know that smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Australia," said Mr Jones.

"The Federal Government have finally provided a green light for the prescription model to enable millions of Australian smokers to have the most genuine opportunity to safely quit smoking.

"It is now important to focus on putting these changes into place swiftly and consistently across the country," Mr Jones concluded.

- Ends-

The Quit Collective Individuals 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, MedicalNicotine 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

Contact:

Adi Stevens, RoyceComm, 0407 411 088, adi@royce.com.au

Richard Amos, RoyceComm, 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.