

Inquiry into the Use of Electronic Cigarettes and Personal Vaporisers in Australia

To the members of the inquiry committee:

I am the manager of the stop smoking service for Leicester city, UK. Over three years ago, we saw the potential for e-cigarettes and personal vaporisers to help people stop smoking.

We are a service that listens to what our service users say, and we build our programmes based on what works best. Since taking an ecig-friendly approach, we have been delighted to see consistently better than average results with vaping, either with or without nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

Each year, we have seen increasing numbers of smokers quit with vaping.

In 2014-15, we saw 293 smokers use ecigs, of whom 180 quit (61% success rate, compared with 47% success for those using NRT)

In 2015-16, we saw 752 smokers use ecigs, of whom 487 quit (65% success rate, compared with 45% for those using NRT)

In 2016-17, we saw 851 smokers use ecigs, of whom 512 quit (60% success rate, compared with 45% for those using NRT)

Our advice to those stopping smoking with ecigs is that it is their choice whether they continue to vape – the nicotine they get from their vaporiser could be exactly what stops them relapsing to smoking, and it's the smoke that kills.

The key difference that we see among service users who have switched to vaping though is their increased confidence in their determination never to smoke again. Most have tried many, many times before, with medicinal products, or by willpower alone, and have relapsed to smoking. Vaping has made a difference that has taken them (and often their families) by surprise.

We have not had a single ex-smoker/now vaper talk of any ill-effects from vaping apart from the occasional dry throat, which can be fixed with a change of liquid. Most have reported better health outcomes (more energy, breathing easier, improved stamina, less need to take medication for other conditions).

Flavours have been important, with the majority of service users choosing fruit flavours in preference to tobacco flavours.

The other unexpected benefit has been their enthusiasm for 'converting' other smokers in their family and social circle. One of my team told me recently that all her vaping quitters are turning into stop-smoking advisors, as they encourage their family and friends to give it a go.

Even highly dependent smokers such as those with poor mental health, and homeless people, are doing really well with vaping. Nursing staff in the mental health wards who were initially sceptical about vaping have been pleasantly surprised at how much easier it has been for their patients who have started using a vaporiser to manage their nicotine needs.

I urge the Australian Parliament to

- Make low concentrations of nicotine legal for vaping for tobacco harm reduction. This involves exempting nicotine e-liquid from the 'Poisons Standard', applying the same exemption as for nicotine in tobacco.
- Classify nicotine and vaping devices as consumer products.
- Introduce a proportionate regulatory approach which reflects the level of risk of e-cigarettes, enabling their use by adult smokers while minimising any public health risk.

Thank you

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