

Sunday 5 November 2023

Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety
NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney,
NSW, 2000

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Inquiry into e-cigarette regulation and compliance in NSW

Asthma Australia strongly welcomes the Committee's inquiry into improving e-cigarette regulation and compliance in NSW. We have been strong advocates of reforms to the Therapeutic Goods Administration regulation of vapes to help curb the spiralling prevalence of vaping and welcomed the Federal Government's planned prohibition of the importation of all vapes, excluding those supplied by prescription for therapeutic use. We are deeply concerned about the adverse health impacts of e-cigarettes given the conclusive evidence e-cigarette use causes a range of adverse health impacts,ⁱ and support NSW Government action to enforce the Federal Government's reforms as well as enact their own measures to reduce the growing trend of recreational vaping.

In this letter, we briefly highlight key issues for people with asthma in relation to e-cigarettes. In addition, we acknowledge the significant work that the Cancer Council has undertaken in this area and support their submission and recommendations to this inquiry. We also note the submission of the Lung Foundation Australia to this inquiry and support their recommendations.

KEY ISSUES FOR PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA

- **Short-term health impacts**

Evidence shows that vaping has **short term, detrimental health impacts** including **respiratory disease and lung injury**, cardiovascular disease, addiction, burns and injuries, intentional and unintentional poisoning, acute nicotine toxicity, including seizures.ⁱⁱ ² Although there is a need for more research on the relationship between e-cigarette use and respiratory outcomes such as asthma, we regularly hear from consumers about how vaping smoke affects their health and triggers their asthma symptoms.

- **Indirect health impacts**

Vaping causes indoor and outdoor air pollution and increased uptake of smoking in non-smokers.ⁱⁱⁱ Both of these outcomes detrimentally affect people with asthma through acting as triggers to asthma symptoms and flare-ups and both are risks factors to its development.

- **Impact on children**

Children with asthma in Australia bear a disproportionate burden of the disease. Asthma is the leading cause of burden of disease for people aged 5–14 years and 460,000 children have asthma.^{iv} Children are much more likely than adults to be hospitalised for asthma, with over 17,000 children with asthma hospitalised in 2022.^v As a result of the prevalence of asthma amongst young people and in view of the known detrimental respiratory health effects of e-cigarettes, we are particularly concerned by the rise of vaping amongst children and young people and the direct and indirect exposure of children and young people to toxic chemicals. We are also concerned by the significant gateway effect of e-cigarettes to tobacco smoking - a significant asthma risk factor and trigger - and how this will have a devastating effect on our youngest generations' health, reversing the progress Australia has had in reducing tobacco use in the recent past.

As noted, we strongly welcome the policy commitment of the Federal Government to end recreational vaping and urge the NSW Government to support these reforms with robust enforcement and compliance measures, educational campaigns and increased support for people to give up smoking vapes and tobacco. Such strong action is critical at the state level if Australia is to be successful in ending recreational vaping and realising the health benefits this will have to people who vape, to people with asthma and other health conditions affected by passive smoking, and to a future generation being protected from addiction to nicotine and taking up tobacco smoking.

Asthma Australia welcomes being contacted by the Committee for any further contributions to this important Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Michele Goldman
CEO Asthma Australia

ABOUT ASTHMA AUSTRALIA

Asthma Australia is a for-purpose, consumer organisation which has been improving the lives of people with asthma since 1962. Asthma affects one in nine Australians or 2.7 million people. Asthma is an inflammatory condition of the airways, restricting airflow and it can be fatal. There is no cure, but most people with asthma can experience good control. Our purpose is to help people breathe better so they can live freely. We deliver evidence-based prevention and health strategies to more than half a million people each year.

REFERENCES

ⁱ Banks E, Yazidjoglou A, Brown S, Nguyen M, Martin M, Beckwith K, Daluwatta A, Campbell S, Joshy G. Electronic cigarettes and health outcomes: systematic review of global evidence. Report for the Australian Department of Health. National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Canberra: April 2022.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2022, Australian Burden of Disease Study 2022. AIHW: Canberra

^v AIHW. Principal diagnosis data cubes. Separation statistics by principal diagnosis, 2018-19, 2017-18, 2016-17. AIHW: Canberra.