

Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Thursday 11 April 2024

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024 [Provisions]

Asthma Australia strongly welcomes the Federal Government's introduction of the Vaping Reforms Bill 2024. We have been **strong advocates for the improved regulation of e-cigarettes in Australia** given the growing evidence in relation to the serious health impacts of vaping. In addition, vaping has been shown to be a gateway into tobacco smoking, with its rising prevalence having the potential to reverse the progress Australia has made on reducing smoking rates.ⁱ

In our submission, we briefly highlight key issues for people with asthma in relation to vaping. We would like to acknowledge the important work that the Cancer Council has undertaken in this area and indicate our support for their submission and recommendations to this inquiry.

E-cigarettes and asthma

We summarise below the growing evidence about the detrimental health effects of vaping.

Health impacts

The 2022 systematic review of global evidence on e-cigarettes and health outcomes has found conclusive evidence that vaping can result in **respiratory diseases, lung injury**, addiction, burns and injuries, intentional and unintentional poisoning and acute nicotine toxicity, including seizures.ⁱⁱ More research into the effects of e-cigarettes and respiratory health outcomes is needed, however, as evidence suggesting longer term detrimental associations is currently limited or insufficient.

Indirect health impacts

- **Secondhand vapour**

Vaping causes indoor and outdoor air pollution, which may detrimentally affect people with asthma through acting as triggers to asthma symptoms and flare-ups and risks factors to its development. Although there is a need for more research on the health effects of e-cigarette vapour and respiratory outcomes such as asthma, we hear from consumers about how e-cigarette vapour affects their health and triggers their asthma symptoms.

- **Gateway into tobacco smoking**

There is strong evidence of a gateway effect of vaping into tobacco smoking, which has long been found to increase the risk of developing asthma and to trigger symptoms in people with asthma. The evidence shows that never smokers and non-smokers who **vape are around three times more likely to take up tobacco smoking compared to people who do not use e-cigarettes.**ⁱⁱⁱ This gateway effect could have a particularly devastating effect on the health of younger generations and reverse the progress Australia has made in reducing tobacco use.

Impact on children and adolescents

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

In 2019, 9.6% of people aged 14 to 17 years in Australia had ever used e-cigarettes.^{vi} **In 2022-23, 28% of 14-17 years had used e-cigarettes, nearly triple the amount of young people in just 3 years.**^{vii} Further, the top reason for first using e-cigarettes amongst respondents aged 14-17 years as reported by the National Drug Strategy Household Survey in 2022-23 was 'out of curiosity' (74%).^{viii}

The high asthma prevalence amongst young people together with the known, detrimental respiratory health effects of e-cigarettes is particularly concerning in view of the rise of vaping amongst children and young people and the gateway effect of vaping into tobacco smoking.

In view of the significant health harms of e-cigarettes and their association with increased tobacco smoking, we urge the Committee to support the passing of the Vaping Reforms Bill 2024. The Bill will strengthen the regulation of e-cigarettes and reinforce the prescription pathway to help prevent access to recreational e-cigarettes. It also will help to stop the advertising of e-cigarettes and reduce their appeal in terms of flavours, colours and packaging. These are important measures to reduce the appeal of e-cigarettes to children and young people and urgently needed.

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 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.
- 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.
- ^{vi} [National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023: Young people’s use of vapes and e-cigarettes - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)
- ^{vii} Ibid.
- ^{viii} [National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023: Vaping and e-cigarette use in the NDSHS - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)