

Vaping - An inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland

Submission No: 50
Submitted by: Health and Wellbeing Queensland
Publication:
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

4 May 2023

Ref: HWQLD/23/120

Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
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Dear Secretary

Re: Submission on Vaping — An Inquiry into Reducing Rates of E-Cigarette Use in Queensland

Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQld) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Health and Environment Committee on this important inquiry aimed at reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland.

It is the view of HWQld that this inquiry represents a significant opportunity to address this critical public health issue in Queensland, with growing evidence of the significant chronic disease harms of e-cigarette use and its role in generating new tobacco smokers, particularly young people¹. With a recent survey conducted by the Lung Foundation Australia showing that 85 per cent of Queenslanders think the government should do more to protect children from vaping, now is the time for action.

HWQld was established on 1 July 2019 as an independent statutory body within the health portfolio of the Queensland Government with the objective to improve the health and wellbeing of the Queensland population, including by reducing the burden of chronic diseases through targeting risk factors for those diseases, and reducing health inequity.

Please find below HWQld's response to the Inquiry's terms of reference being considered by the committee.

- 1. The current status in Queensland relating to the:**
 - a. prevalence of e-cigarette use, particularly amongst children and young people; and**
 - b. risks of vaping harmful chemicals, including nicotine, to individuals, communities, and the health system**
 - c. approaches being taken in Queensland schools and other settings relevant to children and young people to discourage uptake and use of e-cigarettes.**

¹ 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. <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/262914>



HWQld recognises the significance of the increased prevalence of e-cigarette use, particularly amongst children and young people. The 2022 Report of the Queensland Chief Health Officer highlights that in Queensland, based on trends from 2018 to 2022, e-cigarette use increased 40 per cent over the time period. The Public Health Association of Australia reports that there are nearly one million regular vapers in Australia (4.7 per cent of men, 2.9 per cent of women) which has doubled since 2019-20. In 16–24-year-olds the rate is 11 per cent.

The Queensland Government's commitment to promoting population health through reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland is aligned with HWQld's Generation Queensland (GenQ) vision to see children born today to experience better health outcomes than previous generations. The GenQ vision is being progressed through four major strategies and initiatives that will be key to ensuring better health for the children and young people of tomorrow. HWQld has undertaken extensive consultation in developing *Making Healthy Happen 2023-2032: A strategy for preventing obesity in Queensland* and its associated action plan which is currently under consideration for government endorsement, as well as a draft *Gather and Grow Queensland Remote Food Security Strategy and Action Plan*. The Clinical Prevention Strategy, also under development, aims to bridge the gap between health promotion and clinical healthcare by integrating prevention. HWQld is also progressing work on an Equity Framework which aims to assist in shifting the social conditions for all communities, families and individuals to flourish.

In addition, HWQld delivers a range of programs and initiatives to empower young Queenslanders to live healthier and more active lives. These include grant programs, research and health promotion initiatives. Two statewide programs currently funded by HWQld include the [My health for life program](#) and the [Deadly Choices program](#). Both of these programs take a holistic approach to health and address chronic disease risk factors, including poor nutrition, physical inactivity and smoking, together in an integrated and coordinated manner. They also provide support for participants to access smoking and vaping cessation programs such as Quitline.

HWQld, as the state's prevention agency responsible for improving the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders, adopts a population health perspective on current and emerging public health issues. HWQld holds the position that undertaking appropriate action to reduce the rate of e-cigarette use in Queensland will not only increase the participation of Queenslanders in the economy and society, but also assist in managing the challenges faced by the health system due to the escalating burden of chronic diseases and other related issues.

2. Opportunities to increase:

- a. *awareness of the harmful effects of e-cigarette use (with and without nicotine) to an individual's health, and the effectiveness of preventative activities; and*
- b. *accessibility and effectiveness of services and programs to prevent uptake and continuing use of e-cigarettes.*



HWQld strongly supports the Queensland Government efforts to increase awareness of the harmful effects of e-cigarette including the [Vape Truths initiative](#). HWQld additionally supports the need for novel, comprehensive and sustained social marketing campaigns and activities to increase awareness of the harmful effects of e-cigarettes and combat the novel marketing campaigns used by the e-cigarette industry.

Empowering children and young people to make healthy choices from an early age, including choices related to vaping, can assist them to avoid health challenges later in life. HWQld emphasises the importance of developing tailored approaches that are informed by and meet the specific needs and concerns of different cohorts and communities, in the Queensland Government's response to the issue of vaping. Delivering prevention activities across settings where people live, learn, work, play and age including the family home, schools, sport and recreation facilities and community centres help to support these choices.

Complex issues require complex solutions. Applying a systems change approach can assist in identifying, implementing and aligning actions across sectors to address the varied and complex drivers of complex public health issues. Across HWQld's range of strategies, programs and initiatives, the agency focuses on approaches that empower people to stay as healthy as they can be, which are informed by an understanding of the social, commercial, environmental, economic, cultural and other determinants of health, to drive positive change at the individual and population level. A systems approach which is shaped by the complex interplay of these determinants could provide an effective way to leverage opportunities to reduce rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland, and HWQld would be pleased to continue to work with relevant Queensland Government agencies to address this issue.

3. Consideration of waste management and environmental impacts of e-cigarette products.

HWQld recognises the vital importance of minimising waste and environmental impacts of e-cigarettes to protect the environment and promote public health. While HWQld is not currently equipped to provide expert commentary on considerations regarding waste management and environmental impacts of e-cigarette products, we fully support efforts to address these pressing issues. HWQld encourages governments, manufacturers, retailers and consumers to work together on proactive measures to reduce waste and mitigate the negative consequences of e-cigarette products on the environment.

4. A jurisdictional analysis of other e-cigarette use inquiries, legislative frameworks, policies and preventative activities (including their effectiveness in reducing e-cigarette use).

HWQld is leading nationally, having initiated a network with the other state prevention/health promotion agencies (VicHealth, Wellbeing SA and Healthway in Western Australia) to work collaboratively towards achieving prevention priorities. HWQld recently participated in discussions with the Chief Executives of national and international health promotion agencies (including Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan and Korea) where the main topics of interest included economic models for prevention, vaping and childhood obesity. These discussions highlighted the valuable work of prevention agencies leading the way on making real and measurable change in the most challenging of public health issues.



HWQld welcomes the recent public national announcement by the Honourable Mark Butler MP, Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, to introduce world leading reform to reduce the harm of tobacco and vaping products, including a raft of reforms on e-cigarettes. Furthermore, there are several states that are directing their prevention/health promotion agencies to lead in addressing the increasing rates of e-cigarette use. This is because they are in a unique position to foster collaborative efforts across government and public health agencies to ensure a coordinated, cohesive and targeted strategy to reduce the harm of tobacco and vaping products.

South Australia has indicated its intention to do this by establishing Wellbeing SA as the state's independent prevention agency to lead an integrated prevention remit that includes tobacco and vaping, alcohol and other drugs, alongside obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

Furthermore, Healthway (the Western Australian Health Promotion Foundation) funds health promotion projects, research and advocacy to reduce the impact of vaping in the Western Australia community, particularly for young people. Healthway funds population-based education and advocacy initiatives related to tobacco smoking and vaping and supports research including exploring the impact of social media vaping advertising on young people. And the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) works closely with their partners Quit Victoria to develop and provide evidence-based information to the community and key target audiences through social marketing campaigns and curriculum resources.

HWQld recognises the significance of the vaping issue in Queensland and is committed to working with other Queensland Government agencies, as well as our state prevention/health promotion agency counterparts in collective efforts to better arm and educate individuals and communities on the dangers associated with vaping and provide necessary legislation measures, services and programs to prevent uptake and continuing use of e-cigarettes. By working together, we can see continued declines in smoking rates and stop future generations falling victim to nicotine addiction through vaping. Our collective goal is to improve the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders, through reducing chronic diseases.

Should you require further information in relation to this submission, the HWQld contact is Ms Gemma Hodgetts, Executive Director, on telephone at [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Dr Robyn Littlewood
Chief Executive Officer
Health and Wellbeing Queensland

making healthy happen

