

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

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Inquiry into reducing rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland

The Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the enquiry relating to reducing the rates of e-cigarette use in Queensland.

As you would be aware, YAC is a community legal and social welfare agency for children and young people aged 10-17, particularly those involved in, or at risk of involvement in the youth justice system.

Our submission relates to the terms of reference that will directly impact children and young people.

Risks of vaping harmful chemicals, including nicotine, to individuals

The research in Queensland indicates that there has been an increased use of e-cigarettes by young people and children.

Our organisation, through its work with children and young people, has observed that there is an apparent lack of knowledge around the: -

- chemicals used in vaping products, particularly those that have been manufactured in less regulated countries; and,
- harmful impacts of e-cigarette on individuals and the community.

There is a general misconception amongst the younger population that vaping e-cigarettes is a healthier alternative to the use of normal cigarettes. Children and young people have a limited understanding of the health risks associated with using e-cigarettes generally.

Additional evidence based - research regarding the medium and long-term effects specifically to children and young people is needed to reinforce the risks associated in its use.

Approaches being taken in Queensland schools and other settings relevant to children and young people to discourage uptake and use of e-cigarettes

Education of children and young people about health issues arising from the use of e-cigarettes is paramount to discourage its use.

Education programs also need to target those who have disengaged from school and those who are in the detention centre.

Parents, legal guardians and welfare agencies should also be educated so that they can assist children and young people in understanding the impact of using e-cigarettes.

Opportunities to increase awareness of the harmful effects of e-cigarette use and accessibility and effectiveness of services and programs to prevent uptake and continuing use of e-cigarettes.

YAC endorses additional opportunities to increase awareness of the harmful effects of e-cigarette use (with and without nicotine) to an individual's health, and the effectiveness of preventative activities.

Education is one stream in which awareness should be raised in relation to the risks associated with the use of e-cigarettes. Such education should not be limited to schools as part of a school curriculum.

There are children and young people who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Some have disengaged from school or live in remote communities with limited access to educational opportunities.

Program delivery by social welfare and health services would target some of these disadvantaged children and young people. It could include telephone access to health service providers if they are seeking health advice on the use of e-cigarettes.

A media campaign using social media and television platforms would also reach a larger audience of children and young people.

Overall, a collaborative effort from agencies in health, social and welfare sectors is required to achieve increased accessibility and effectiveness of services and programs to prevent uptake and continuing use of e-cigarettes.

Jurisdictional analysis of legislative frameworks.

YAC strongly opposes the criminalisation of children and young people using e-cigarettes given their vulnerabilities and lack of maturity. This would also be unjust where children and young people have not had the benefit of comprehensive and preventative opportunities such as education on the use of e-cigarettes and its risks.

Any changes to the legal framework in this area should only be made to criminalise the (a) distribution of e-cigarettes by companies or businesses and (b) the sale of e-cigarettes to children and young people.

References

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