

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

Submission No: 71
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Committee Secretary
Health and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Q 4000
c/ HEC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: Vaping – An Inquiry into Reducing Rates of e-cigarettes in Queensland

Thank-you for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Health and Environment Committee* for the inquiry into 'Vaping – An Inquiry into Reducing Rates of e-cigarettes in Queensland'.

On behalf of the residents of my Nanango Electorate, I would like to address the impact of vaping across our communities. My submission will primarily address Consideration One of the Inquiry Terms of Reference:

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

According to the Lung Foundation of Australia, between 2016 and 2019, the proportion of people who had ever used e-cigarettes increased from 8.8% to 11.3% with a notable rise among youth and young adults (as sourced from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2019). In Queensland the Chief Health Officer has highlighted the ongoing rise in vaping with almost 20% of Queenslanders ever vaping and 14.5% of adults aged 18 to 29 years currently vaping.

Anecdotally however, it would appear that vaping is even more common practice amongst young people of high school age. I am extremely concerned about this trend, especially with the knowledge that these products are known to contain nicotine and a variety of other harmful chemicals. As noted by the Lung Foundation, vapes are an aerosol made up of toxic particles that contain and emit harmful compounds, such as formaldehyde (used in glue), acrolein (a herbicide primarily used to kill weeds) and propylene glycol (found in paint) that can cause irreversible lung damage and which are toxic to human cells. Like we have seen with the devastating impact of the chroming epidemic on our local communities, our young people can become addicted to the purposeful breathing in of chemicals and this has led to serious health implications and sometimes death.

It has been shared with me that many young people are vaping at school, and even in the classroom, hiding vapes in jumper sleeves or pockets. Vaping in the school toilets is very

common. School students note that it is a daily occurrence and even if they can't see other students vaping in the toilets, they can smell it.

I appreciate the toll that this is placing teachers and school staff under as they are doing everything they can to restrict this banned activity and I acknowledge the extra workload the monitoring of this behaviour requires.

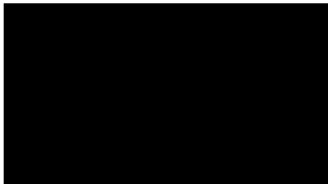
It beggars belief that the Qld State Government has not captured any data about school children and vaping since 2017. Yet, the dramatic increase of the use of vaping is obvious and can be seen by a layperson walking down the street or speaking to any person around a school. It is obvious young people are either oblivious or unaware of the health impacts of vaping and without better enforcement and regulation of these products, the use of vapes will only become more popular.

In a regional town like Kingaroy, with a population of just 10,000 people, access to e-cigarettes is common-place with three specialist vape stores opening in Kingaroy alone in the past twelve months.

Local business owners have approached me in regard to these stores and their sale of illegal e-cigarettes, especially those containing nicotine. Further, it is alleged that whilst some of these stores have been reported and fined, the current laws and fines are not a deterrent, as income from sales far outweighs the penalty. The stores provide an automatic teller machine at the door and only accept cash. They willingly serve young people, in school uniform.

I appreciate the chance to share this information with the Committee on behalf of the people of the Nanango Electorate.

Yours sincerely,



Deb Frecklington
Member for Nanango