

## Media Release

### **Cancer Council calls for stronger action on e-cigarettes as landmark study shows young Australians are most at risk**

Urgent government action required to reverse unfolding public health crisis

Cancer Council is calling on all governments to take stronger action to protect young people from e-cigarettes, following the release of a new study from Australian National University (ANU) showing e-cigarette harms outweigh any potential benefits and that young people are most at risk.

Chair of Cancer Council's national Public Health Committee, Anita Dessaix, said the new ANU report was the most comprehensive study of e-cigarettes conducted anywhere in the world and sends an urgent message to government about reversing an unfolding public health crisis.

"There has never been a comprehensive, independent systematic analysis on e-cigarettes from a global centre of epidemiology like this report," Ms Dessaix said. "It reflects, in a scientific context, what we are seeing in Australian schools and streets and have been concerned about for years.

"The report reconfirms previous analysis that e-cigarette use triples the risk of smoking uptake in never-smokers and non-smokers. It also shows e-cigarettes cause multiple direct health harms including acute lung injury, poisoning, burns, seizures and increased nicotine addiction."

Ms Dessaix also noted that the value of the report is its scope and method, searching more than 6,500 studies on all the health effects of e-cigarettes, critically appraising the literature and ranking the strength of evidence for the findings on each health impact.

"What makes it so important for federal, state and territory governments is that it shows the harms of e-cigarettes far outweigh any potential benefits and our youngest and most vulnerable are at greatest risk," she added.

The ANU study shows that most e-cigarette use is not for quitting smoking, most of it is done in tandem with smoking and most users are young people who are now at greatly increased risk of smoking uptake.

The effects on increased smoking may already be visible, as the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows smoking rates in males aged 18 to 24 have increased for the first time since trend data was collected 20 years ago. This overlaps with the largest e-cigarette user group by age and sex identified in the ANU report.

"The drivers of this crisis are entrepreneurs selling e-cigarettes online, at service stations, tobacconists and specialty retailers, all of it in plain view under the noses of our health and law enforcement authorities.

"Governments have laws at their disposal to reverse this crisis, but they need to enforce them. It's now been five months since the Australian Government streamlined prescription rules to enable individuals who might benefit from e-cigarettes to access them while protecting young people.

“The crisis we are seeing among young people will only get worse until governments impose heavy penalties on the e-cigarette sellers blatantly operating in breach of Australian poison laws,” concluded Ms Dessaix.

To learn more about Cancer Council’s call for stronger action to protect young people from the harms of e-cigarettes, visit [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au).

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See Cancer Council’s [website](http://www.cancer.org.au), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.org.au), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/cancer.org.au) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/cancer.org.au).

**Notes to editors:** Why the new ANU report strengthens the case for enforcing laws designed to protect young Australians from e-cigarettes harms

The ANU report is unique in its scope, rigour and timeliness. Key findings which should prompt governments to enforce their laws designed to protect young people from e-cigarettes include:

- E-cigarette use triples the risk of smoking uptake in never-smokers and non-smokers.
- Most e-cigarette users are young people.
- Most e-cigarette use is not for the purposes of quitting smoking.
- Most e-cigarette uses vape and smoke in tandem.
- E-cigarette use by non-smokers results in dependence on e-cigarettes.
- Flavours attract adolescents to e-cigarettes.

The findings above are based on evidence systematically ranked as “conclusive”, “strong” or “substantial”. There was no evidence supporting a health benefit from e-cigarettes that met these thresholds.