

Media release
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Parents right to worry about e-cigarettes and kids, says Cancer Council

New research shows parents want tougher e-cigarette restrictions

New research highlighting parents' concerns about the availability and promotion of e-cigarettes to teenagers supports the need for further action to protect young people, Cancer Council Australia said today.

A poll of more than 2,000 parents conducted by Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital showed that almost three quarters (73 per cent) of parents were concerned that their children might try e-cigarettes and almost half (49 percent) agreed that "the sale, supply, and use of all types of e-cigarettes should be banned in Australia". The overwhelming majority supported tighter restrictions aimed at preventing teens from using these products.

Chair of Cancer Council Australia's Tobacco Issues Committee, Libby Jardine, said parents were right to worry that e-cigarette companies were using unethical tactics and loopholes to sell their products to vulnerable young people.

"The Federal Government has taken a strong evidence-based stance on e-cigarettes to protect kids and young people and should be commended for holding strong in the face of aggressive industry lobbying.

"However, we know from previous research that at least 13 per cent of Australian teenagers have tried e-cigarettes. This is a real cause for concern, particularly because there is growing evidence that e-cigarettes are an on ramp for smoking in children and young people.

"In recent years we have also seen the proliferation of shops selling enticing non-nicotine e-cigarettes and liquids with thousands of attractive flavours like green apple ice, cinnamon roll and alpha mint– these are purely recreational products that have no place in our market for either kids or adults."

87 per cent of parents surveyed reported that they were worried that those under the age of 18 can easily buy e-cigarettes and liquids online, a concern that Ms Jardine echoed.

"Despite the fact that the possession of nicotine e-cigarette products is illegal in Australia without a medical authority, kids are able to access and import nicotine through websites that don't require a prescription or have proper age checks.

"Spot testing of e-liquids in Australian retail shops also shows that liquid nicotine is available for sale in Australia, in breach of drug and poisons laws. Clearly we need tougher restrictions on e-cigarette imports and sales and to ask why we are allowing retail sale of these dangerous recreational products at all."

"E-cigarette companies and Big Tobacco have tried to argue that e-cigarettes are a safe alternative to smoking, but if they worked as a quitting tool, they would be approved by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration and sold and promoted under strict rules – not flaunted online and easily available in retail outlets.

"Currently there isn't enough evidence to suggest that e-cigarettes help smokers quit – in fact there is increasing evidence that they cause harm. These devices contain a range of



unregulated and potentially toxic chemicals that young people and adults are sucking into their lungs.”

Ms Jardine said it was important that evidence-based policy guided the regulation of e-cigarettes in Australia.

“Along with almost all independent public health and medical organisations and all health departments in Australia, including the Australian Medical Association, and the World Health Organisation, Cancer Council strongly supports a precautionary approach to e-cigarettes.

“Australia is lucky to have one of the lowest smoking rates in the world. When it comes to continuing to drive down Australian smoking rates, what we need is more of what works, such as hard-hitting antismoking public education campaigns, and protections to take our successes in tobacco control into the next generation – safe from industry peddling and meddling.”

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