

3 May 2024

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

Re: Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024 [Provisions]

I am writing on behalf of the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to provide additional evidence supporting the oral evidence provided to the committee on the 2nd of May. The two pieces of evidence relate to the 'gateway effect' of people moving from vaping to smoking, and vaping rates amongst young people in New Zealand.

The evidence concerning a potential 'gateway effect' from vaping to smoking tobacco is inconclusive but may be suggestive of a relationship. An often-cited 2020 meta-analysis by Chan et al. found that there is an association between adolescent vaping and smoking initiation, but that the evidence supporting this association is limited by weaknesses in the studies reviewed.¹ Of particular concern within the evidence is a failure to control for shared risk factors for both vaping and smoking. The meta-analysis found that those who vaped during adolescence had 2.93 times higher odds of future smoking initiation, but that the studies with larger effect sizes tended to have more limitations (e.g. lack of controls, attrition, non-representative samples). The most strongly controlled study included in the meta-analysis found a much lower odds ratio of 1.75 times more likely to initiate smoking. The authors of the analysis therefore conclude that while there is evidence of a relationship between vaping and smoking, there is less conclusive evidence for the gateway effect. Until stronger longitudinal evidence emerges that adequately controls for shared risk factors, we would recommend caution be used when interpreting evidence.

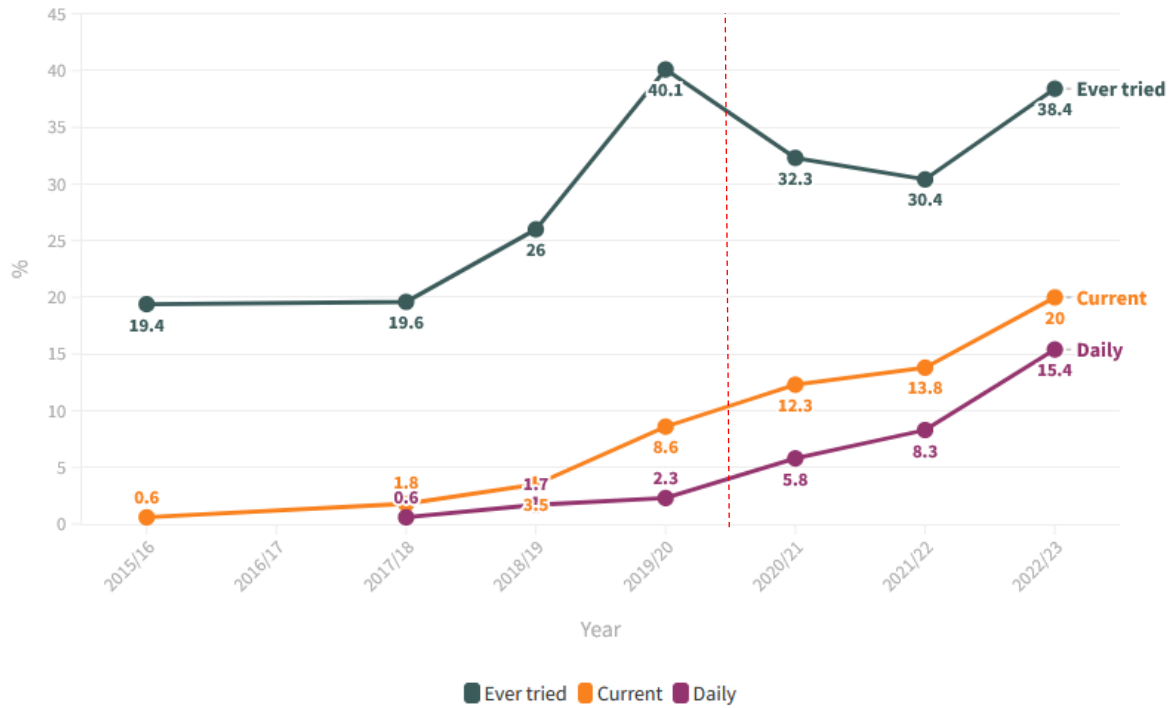
Regarding vaping rates amongst young people in New Zealand, the below graph demonstrates the concerning rise of vaping (including daily use) in young people under 18.

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Figure 2. Trends in vaping among New Zealand youth (15-17 years old)



Source: [New Zealand Health Survey Data Explorer](#) • Current use defined as vaping 'at least once a month'



This data from the New Zealand Health Survey shows that 15.4% of young people aged 15-17 are vaping daily. This compares to 5.5% of 16-17 year olds vaping daily, and 22.1% vaping in the past month in Australia 2022/23.² This suggests that while the rate of past month vaping in Australia and New Zealand is somewhat similar, that daily vaping in this cohort is roughly three times as prevalent. The dotted red line on the graph represents the introduction of reforms designed to control the availability of regulated vaping products and prevent their sale to young people by limiting access, promotion, and product types. This suggests that these measures have been ineffective in preventing uptake of vaping amongst young people in New Zealand.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss any of this additional evidence, or any other matters relating to the inquiry.

Sincerely,

Robert Taylor

Manager – Policy & Engagement

References

1. Chan GCK, Stjepanović D, Lim C, Sun T, Shanmuga Anandan A, Connor JP, et al. Gateway or common liability? A systematic review and meta-analysis of studies of adolescent e-cigarette use and future smoking initiation. *Addiction*. 2021;116(4):743-56; Available from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/add.15246>.
2. Scully M, Bain E, Koh I, Wakefield M, Durkin S. ASSAD 2022/2023: Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco and e-cigarettes. Cancer Council Victoria; 2023. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/secondary-school-students-use-of-tobacco-and-e-cigarettes-2022-2023.pdf>.