

Select Committee on Tobacco Harm Reduction,
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

To whom it may concern,

My name is . I'm 53, currently unemployed and living in
, SA.

I had been a smoker for 41 years. Oh God! For so long! I started when I was 12 in an asinine attempt to make friends and gain approval from someone. Anyone. I started work when I was 14 and so could afford to feed my habit. I grew to smoking a pack a day (20) cigarettes that would cost anywhere from \$50 to \$150 a week, depending on what I smoked. So much money, just thrown away! If it was a choice between smokes and food, the smokes won every time.

Of course, smoking for that long a time had caused damage. I was short of breath and had a permanent cough (which was not ideal in our current climate), not to mention stinking and being a social pariah.

Oh, I had tried to quit smoking over the years. Nicotine gum, those puffer things, patches, cold-turkey - I had tried them all. Success would last from days to months. The longest I went was 4 months cold-turkey and every day was a struggle but a difficult day sent me straight back to the smokes.

Dammit.

I had tried vaping a few years ago and lasted a few months but when I ran out of juice I just went back to the smokes. And then the pandemic hit.

Long story short, when I managed to get on a flight home I had, for some mad reason, packed my vaping gear and thank God I had because those buggers took my smokes off me when I went into quarantine. I had a mad panic until I realised I could vape.

Hallelujah!

I've been vaping since. I haven't had a cigarette for 3 months and it's been great. I still wanted one for the first month but now the smell revolts me. I'm ashamed that I smoked for so long, threw so much money away and made my loved ones put up with that stinking habit.

Since I started vaping, that persistent cough has disappeared and I can breathe again. I'm not on edge so my anxiety is under control and because I'm only spending about \$20 a week, my general physical and mental health is improved due to better nutrition and less shame and guilt.

My loved ones have noticed the improvements and whilst they were initially concerned (having heard about those Yankee kids vaping vitamin E liquid) I've been able to educate and reassure them. They're happy I made the switch to vaping.

What I would like to see in tobacco harm reduction is for nicotine liquid (juice) to be available from a dedicated vape shop where the products have been manufactured by companies who know what they're doing and love what they do. Where the products are safe (child-proof bottles, correct ingredients), the staff are free to advise and can restrict sales to those over the legal age. I went to a vape shop recently and the owner couldn't give me advice inside the shop as it was illegal.

That's insane. And that's when mistakes can happen.

As an ex-smoker I have found access to e-cigarette/nicotine vaping products under Australia's current regulatory framework is extremely difficult and under the proposed framework unworkable for the following reasons:

- Having to find a doctor willing to write a prescription when there are only a handful in the country,
- Having to rely on the internet for information and advice, knowing the internet is loaded with misinformation,
- Being unable to buy nicotine vaping liquid easily will send me back to smoking and that would be a massive step backwards.

I don't want to smoke but I'm realistic enough to know that without ready access to vaping supplies, that's what will happen.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely.