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11 April 2024

To: Senator Marielle Smith
Chairperson
Senate Committee for Community Affairs Legislation

Dear Senator Smith

Re: *Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024.*

Westcare Incorporated ('Westcare') is writing to the Committee to express our strong support for the *Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024.*

Westcare is an organisation that represents people with a disability and aims to ensure everyone can live life to the full. Westcare is a beacon of hope and support in our community. For over 76 years Westcare has been providing essential services to those in need. Our mission is to empower individuals towards independence through accommodation, training, development and employment, and to build a stronger, healthier community.

The tobacco and vape industry has deliberately marketed vape products to young people, and vaping rates in Australia have increased significantly over recent years, particularly among children and young people¹. The Bill will close the loophole that is currently exploited by the tobacco and vape industry, whereby retailers sell falsely labelled "non-nicotine" vapes to children. The Bill will protect Australian children and young people, while still ensuring that people who smoke can access vaping products for smoking cessation through a prescription model.

Westcare is concerned about vaping among Australian children and young people.

Over recent years, the rate of vaping in Australia has increased significantly, particularly among young people².

- One in ten Australian children aged 14-17 years currently vape³.
- There are numerous established health harms from vaping. These include exposure to toxins⁴ and adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and lungs⁵.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

⁴ Larcombe A, Allard S, Pringle P, et al. Chemical analysis of fresh and aged Australian e-cigarette liquids. *Med J Aust* 2022;216(1):27-32.

⁵ Banks E, Yazidjoglou A, Brown S, et al. Electronic cigarettes and health outcomes: umbrella and systematic review of the global evidence. *Medical Journal of Australia* 2023;218(6):267-75.



- Exposure to nicotine during adolescence has been associated with cognitive and behavioural impairment and lasting structural changes in the brain⁶.
- One in ten vape shops are located close to schools⁷.
- Most teenagers say it is easy to access vapes⁸.
- 87% of Australian adults support prohibiting the sale of vapes (with or without nicotine) to people under 18 years of age⁹.
- Most teenagers try vapes out of curiosity, not to quit smoking¹⁰.

Westcare is a Member of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health, a leading, independent, Australian tobacco control advocacy organisation. We support ACOSH's goal to create a tobacco-free and vape-free Australia.

Should have any questions, please feel free to contact Sue Morey OAM (Westcare Board Director) at the Department of Respiratory Medicine, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

Yours sincerely

Rob Wilton
Chief Executive Officer

⁶ Castro EM, Lotfipour S, Leslie FM. Nicotine on the developing brain. *Pharmacol Res* 2023;190:106716; Wood L, Greenhalgh EM, Hanley-Jones S. 5.4 Adolescence and brain maturation. In: Scollo M, Winstanley M, eds. *Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues*. Melbourne: Cancer Council Victoria, 2019.

⁷ Tuson M, Lizama N, Kameron C, Gazey A, Wood L. Vape stores in Western Australia: growth, proximity to schools and socio-economic gradient of density. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2024:100118.

⁸ Watts, C., Egger, S., Dessaix, A., Brooks, A., Jenkinson, E., Grogan, P., & Freeman, B. (2022). Vaping product access and use among 14–17-year-olds in New South Wales: a cross-sectional study. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 46(6), 814-820.

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW; 2024.

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW; 2024.