

6 May 2024

Senator Louise Pratt

Legislation Committee

Standing Committee on Community Affairs

Via email: Community.Affairs.Sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Pratt

RE: Community Affairs Legislation Committee: Inquiry into the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024 - AQoNs 1 May

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the following question on notice and provide further detail to the Committee to assist with deliberations:

- 1. Would you support a referral pathway to doctors and school nurses for children and young people who are vaping, or have a suggestion for an alternative mechanism?**

VicHealth is concerned about the problems caused by vaping and nicotine addiction in schools across Australia and welcomes the Australian Government's proposed reforms which will protect current and future generations from the predatory tactics used by tobacco and vaping industries and the harms that these products pose, especially to children and young people.

VicHealth supports the prescription pathway proposed in the reforms and the key role GPs and nurse practitioners will play in helping people deal with nicotine addiction caused by tobacco and vaping products, including through the Victorian [Doctors in Schools Program](#) and the [School Nursing Program](#).

However, VicHealth notes that the prescription of vapes as a treatment for nicotine addiction should not be considered a primary method, as other more effective cessation tools and treatments exist. The recently [updated RACGP guidelines](#) note that *"nicotine vaping products are not currently recommended as a smoking cessation aid for people under 18 years of age as to date there have been no studies of effectiveness and safety in this age group"*. Further, there are currently approved pharmacological therapies which can be used in combination with behavioural

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

Level 2, 355 Spencer Street, West Melbourne VIC 3003
PO Box 13137, Law Courts VIC 8010

T +61 3 9667 1333 W vichealth.vic.gov.au

E vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au

ABN 20 734 406 352

support, as therapies ahead of the prescription of vapes. In fact, evidence suggests that the majority of people quit unaided (i.e. without such therapies).

In addition, provision and referral to counselling with healthcare professionals and the use of Quitline services which are tailored to the needs of young people should be prioritized. These cessation supports, combined with mass education campaigns are key to helping young people quit or say no to vaping.

In line with Cancer Council Australia, we encourage the nationally consistent delivery of Quitline services tailored to the needs of young people, and that young people are able to engage with Quitline via the modality that best suits their needs. This requires a nationally standardised approach including developing and implementing comprehensive and integrated guidelines; standards for professional training, resources and cessation advice; centralised monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistency and quality.

Our research shows that cessation support is best tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of young people. Strong regulation, alongside investment in cessation supports, and programs to prevent and reduce vaping and tobacco use is critical to diminishing the health toll on the Australian community, especially young people.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sandro Demaio
Chief Executive Officer
VicHealth

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

Level 2, 355 Spencer Street, West Melbourne VIC 3003
PO Box 13137, Law Courts VIC 8010

T +61 3 9667 1333 **W** vichealth.vic.gov.au

E vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au

ABN 20 734 406 352