

20 November 2020

Senator Hollie Hughes
Chair of Select Committee on Tobacco Harm Reduction
Via email: tobaccoharmreduction.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Hughes

Thank you for your supplementary questions to my submission and my appearance before the Inquiry into Tobacco Harm Reduction on 19 November 2020.

In response to the questions:

QoN 013-01

Do you agree with Dr Skerritt of the TGA statement that “the evidence is that vaping is less harmful than tobacco smoking”?

Answer:

I understand that the question from Senator Canavan and the answer from Dr Skerritt of the TGA was:

“Senator CANAVAN: We’ve asked a lot of science questions here today. I will ask the scientist who is here. Is smoking more harmful than vaping?”

“Dr Skerritt: I believe that smoking is more harmful than vaping but that does not make vaping harmless—in the same way that being hit by a car on the freeway is less harmful than being hit by a truck but it is not desirable.”

I agree with the answer provided by Dr Skerritt.

Question part a. If no, do you think that the current TGA model does not go far enough?

Answer:

N/A

Question part b. If yes, do you then agree with the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association’s view that “The bottom line is that vaping is not risk free and if you don’t smoke you shouldn’t vape. However, if you are a smoker who can’t quit you will dramatically reduce your risk of dying from cancer, heart and lung disease if you switch to vaping”.

Answer:

No. There is accumulating and substantial evidence for the immediate health harms of vaping. The evidence regarding the long-term harms of vaping is not yet available. As you will be aware, it took decades of detailed research to confirm the harms of cigarette smoking with the confirmation that smoking causes lung cancer in 1950, with further evidence emerging over subsequent decades on other harmful consequences of smoking and passive smoking.

QoN 013-02

Do you or has your organisation ever received direct or indirect support from the Pharmaceutical industry, including travel, attendance at conference, or events sponsorships, including from the following manufacturers of Nicotine replacement therapies?

Answer:

I have never received funding or assistance from the pharmaceutical industry.

The Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) was established in 1971 and a sister organisation was established in Western Australia in 1976. I have examined the historical records of ACOSH and it would not appear that there are any occasions where ACOSH received direct or indirect support, in any form, from the pharmaceutical industry.

Kind regards

Maurice G Swanson OAM
Chief Executive