

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Health and Aged Care

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs

Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) Bill 2023, and the Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products)(Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2023

2 November 2023

PDR Number: IQ23-000125

Gateway from vaping to smoking

Spoken

Hansard page number: 12

Senator: Maria Kovacic

Question:

Senator KOVACIC: Do you have any information or evidence available that talks about that sort of pathway from vaping to smoking with youths, or the reverse trajectory with older smokers? Is that something the department has looked at?

Ms Street: We do have some evidence that shows that vaping can be a gateway into smoking. But we also have evidence that when you are a smoker and you've tried other mechanisms then, under the guidance of your doctor, a prescription for vaping is a mechanism to help you to cease smoking. So, it's in younger people, but for anyone who's taking up vaping there is evidence that it might be a gateway into smoking. And in terms of that evidence I might turn to my colleague to see whether we've got it in front of us. We haven't necessarily got all our materials on vaping, but we can take that on notice—the source of the evidence—in terms of that having a gateway effect.

Answer:

In 2019, the Australian Government commissioned the Australian National University's National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) to undertake a comprehensive public health assessment of e-cigarette use. This project included several evidence reviews that have been published in peer reviewed journals.

One of the NCEPH reviews examined global evidence on the uptake of combustible cigarette smoking following e-cigarette use in non-smokers—including never-smokers, people not currently smoking and past smokers. Most of the studies included in the analysis were focussed on people aged 30 years and under. The review concluded that: *'Across multiple settings, non-smokers who use e-cigarettes are consistently more likely than those avoiding e-cigarettes to initiate combustible cigarette smoking and become current smokers. The magnitude of this risk varied, with an average of around three times the odds. Former smokers using e-cigarettes have over twice the odds of relapse as non-e-cigarettes users.'*¹

A separate NCEPH review summarised global evidence on the efficacy of e-cigarettes for the sustained cessation of combustible tobacco cigarette smoking and for the cessation of ongoing exposure to nicotine. The review was based on findings from randomised control trials and found:

- Limited evidence that freebase nicotine e-cigarettes used with clinical support are efficacious aids for smoking cessation
- Insufficient evidence that nicotine e-cigarettes are efficacious for smoking cessation outside the clinical setting
- Use of nicotine e-cigarettes is likely to result in prolonged exposure to nicotine, including through dual e-cigarette use and combustible smoking.

Both reviews are available on the NCEPH website at:

<https://nceph.anu.edu.au/research/projects/health-impacts-electronic-cigarettes>.

Findings from these reviews are broadly consistent with a range of other credible evidence reviews undertaken in Australia and internationally. This includes reviews published by the Chief Executive Officer of the National Health and Medical Research Council (June 2022), the European Union Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks (April 2021), The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (January 2021) and the U.S. Surgeon General (January 2020).

¹ See: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/11/3/e045603>.