

My name is Maureen Steele (51). I and my partner, (55), have been vaping for 18 months. We both work for the NSW Ministry of Health as health education officers in different Local Health Districts in Sydney. We do not have children.

## **HISTORY**

I started smoking at age 18 and smoked about 10-15 cigarettes a day until age 30 and then about 4-6 a day until 18 months ago.

My partner started smoking at age 21 and smoked 5-10 a day until 18 months ago.

Before we started vaping 18 months ago, we bought a pouch for \$50 a week and a packet of cigarettes for about \$35 totalling \$85 a week.

At the moment my partner as my partner still smokes 1-2 cigarettes a day costing about \$18 a week.

He has noticed that with the increased price he is more likely to smoke a cigarette down to the filter whereas in the past he might put it out half way through.

## **EXPERIENCES WITH NRT AND OTHER QUIT METHODS**

We have both tried to quit on numerous occasions (too many to count).

We have both tried to stop “cold turkey” many times.

We tried patches when they become available, Patches helped us to cut down a bit but had side effects. I experienced excessive sweating and sleep disturbance, my partner had bad headaches.

We have tried each new format of NRT when it has become available including gum, lozenges, spray and inhalers. I found the spray worked the best and managed to stop for a fortnight, but even this was not successful long term.

We both tried champix and both stopped smoking within a week but then experienced suicidal ideation which was very frightening.

## **EXPERIENCES WITH VAPING**

We both started vaping 18 months ago. I gradually cut down and stopped smoking cigarettes completely in a 3 month period.

My partner has had periods of only vape use and periods of vapeing and smoking (2 cigarettes a day). He swaps between the two patterns but says it has been approximately

50/50 for each pattern over the last 18 months. He is about to increase his e-liquid strength to 16mg in an attempt to stop smoking cigarettes.

## **BENEFITS**

Vaping costs us a maximum of \$2 a week for both of us, so at the moment we spend \$20 a week on nicotine as opposed to \$85.

Both our lung health has improved dramatically.

3 years ago, my CO level was 32ppm (most smokers it is about 17, healthy people it is 3). My CO level is now 8.

We feel as though we can both breath better, and run further for longer. We both haven't experienced as many respiratory infections as previously.

## **OTHER BENEFITS**

Never thought we would ever quit and vaping doesn't feel like quitting 100%, we agree. But it is so much better.

## **WHAT WE WANT**

The best situation would be to follow the rest of the world and make nicotine liquid available from a specialist shop, that is regulated to ensure that people under 18 cannot access the product. We want the product to be safe with the creation of safety standards to ensure high quality of the product, child proof caps, warning labels, etc.

If this can't happen then we want the current regulations to continue where we can import from overseas, or preferably buy within Australia

We do not support young people taking up smoking or vaping, whether with nicotine or vaping flavoured e-liquid.

But it is not fair to punish people who have managed to give up smoking by vaping. The short term benefits have been stated. I do not know about the long term side effects. But this is the true for numerous therapies (e.g. contraceptive pill) and is not a reason to disallow it, especially considering we know how many people die directly as a result of smoking cigarettes.