

Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Tobacco Harm Reduction

My name is James Reid.

I'm 57 years old and smoked for over 40 years. I had many, many unsuccessful attempts to give up cigarettes over the years. I tried everything to give up and have lost count of the number of times I tried "cold turkey" only to fail miserably and return to smoking combustible tobacco.

I sought help from numerous GP's on numerous occasions and have tried most approved consumer products from nicotine patches, gum and inhalers to nasal spray, lozenges and even natural remedies such as Lobelia etc. I was signed up to "QUIT" Organisations on multiple occasions and I even paid out considerable sums of money, based on Medical Practitioner's advice, on therapies such as Hypnosis and acupuncture. I've been prescribed drugs such as Champix and Zyban, which actually did more harm than good. None of them worked. It was a no win situation.

In about 2007 or 2008 a work mate and I ordered e-cigarettes from the United States that looked like a cigarette and came with nicotine capsules that fit in the filter section, they tasted awful, gave very little vapour and leaked, spat and burned your mouth and lips. I still stuck with that awful thing for over 6 months before the capsules ran out and I just gave up on it due to the difficulty of obtaining replacement capsules and simply went back to smoking.

I went back to smoking until May of 2017 when I read a post on Facebook and saw a whole new style of vape device. I went straight out and set one up and got vaping. Overnight I gave up cigarettes and have never looked back! Literally overnight!

Luckily I have a very supportive GP that was willing to write a prescription for me to legally buy and import liquid nicotine from overseas under the TGA's personal importation scheme. I add this nicotine to my E-juice to an exact formula and in a controlled environment using all necessary protective equipment. Over the past 3 years I have reduced my nicotine intake level from 12mg to 3mg and aim to be nicotine free by May next year.

I have been cigarette free now for 3 ½ years and my health has improved no end.

One of the biggest eye openers for me is that my Doctor has commented on how much it has helped me and improved my health in a number of areas. My lung capacity has drastically improved, my blood pressure has reduced and my sense of taste and smell has returned.

My Doctor has commented that due to my success he now suggests vaping to a number of his other patients who are long term smokers and have already tried a range of traditional, approved smoking cessation aids.

I now Administrate a Facebook Vaping Group with over 1000 members and I have helped many other people give up cigarettes and live a happier, healthier life.

Because of my involvement with this group I now advocate for vaping at every opportunity as I have seen firsthand how much vaping can improve someone's quality of life and just how incredibly successful it is as a tobacco harm reduction therapy.

In the last 12 months my workplace has gone from 1 vaper and 6 smokers to 6 vapers and 1 smoker. He is holding out, but slowly coming around. He now owns a vape and has said he will kick tobacco very soon. I'm sure he will.

I know there is very strong "anti-vaping" rhetoric out there and many studies are quoted to show the evils of vaping, adverse health effects and supposed gateway effects to smoking that it can have for youth. These factors are often used to justify a negative approach to vaping but most if not all can be easily debunked upon simple research and investigation into the numbers, figures and percentages that they quote.

When considering the research and scientific evidence I would implore you to read between the lines, examine hidden agendas and look carefully at the credentials of the organisations making claims both for and against the benefits of vaping. The conclusions you arrive at will be your own but the results of many of these studies can be quite misleading without careful consideration.

I thought about attaching links to any number of studies and scientific evidence and decided against it. There is a plethora of information out there and I will leave it to those far more qualified than me to refer to specific examples. I will stick to my personal observations, experiences and anecdotes to plead my case instead.

I would ask that while you quite rightly investigate and consider the scientific evidence, please don't forget to listen to the personal success stories of everyday Australians like me.

To limit access to or even ban vape products out of a lack of information and a lack of analysis from professionally instituted studies in this country is negligent to say the least. If our own Government is not prepared to instigate the correct, thorough studies then they should at least take into consideration some of the exhaustive studies that have been conducted overseas.

Ignorance and limited research is no grounds for instituting Regulation or Legislation!

Why won't our politicians and Health Legislators recognise this for what it is and what it can do to help the general public give up smoking? Why are they not interested in saving lives?

Is the Tobacco Tax Revenue more important than Australian lives? While there would ultimately be a loss to Government Tobacco Tax revenue from having less smokers wouldn't we potentially recoup a lot of that through savings made in the areas of public health spending?

Vape products do not contain tobacco or the hundreds/ thousands of harmful chemicals found in combustible tobacco and should not be seen in any context as

equivalent to tobacco products! Why then are many States in Australia taking the easy way out and simply including Vaping under their existing Tobacco Control Legislation?

Nicotine is a whole separate argument, however in correct dosage, it is no more dangerous than caffeine. Caffeine can also be quite dangerous in levels beyond a safe dose.

A sensibly Regulated and Legislated vaping industry in this country would ensure the safe manufacture, supply and use of nicotine and nicotine juice for vaping related purposes. It would ensure such things as legitimate, accredited clean room manufacture, child proof packaging and labelling, authorised vaping retailers, adult only point of sale regulation and enforceable legislation, trained and qualified staff at point of sale and most importantly a vast reduction in the need for the general public to import, store and handle higher potency liquid nicotine products (that quite often wouldn't meet child safety packaging concerns).

Australia needs to catch up to Canada, the UK, the US, New Zealand and countries across the EU by legalising and regulating smoke-free alternatives to ensure a healthier future for all Australians. For the first time in many years Australia is seen as lagging behind the rest of the world in smoking cessation rates instead of being a world leader. We are one of very, very few countries not embracing this relatively new life saving technology. Since the inception of modern vaping nearly 20 years ago there has not been a single legitimate report of a death associated with vaping.

As I'm sure you are aware, the UK is now openly encouraging its citizens to switch from smoking to vaping and have even had vape retailers open premises in the lobbies of their Public Hospitals.

All of these countries have recorded large reductions in the prevalence of combustible tobacco smoking in direct relation to the increase of vaping products.

Legalising nicotine vaping WILL ultimately save hundreds of thousands of Australian lives, and it is time for our government to act.

Over 520,000 Australians now vape and are desperately trying to save themselves from becoming one of the more than 20,000 Australians that will die from combustible tobacco related diseases each year.

Please do the right thing. Legalise nicotine vaping in Australia. Make vaping products more accessible and help more smokers quit for good and save their own lives.

I thank you.