

31 May 2024

Smoking drops but vaping rises

Rural doctors support vaping legislation change

World No Tobacco Day – 31 May 2022

#TobaccoExposed

While the rate of smoking is decreasing across Australia, the use of vapes is growing at a rapid rate among both adults and children.

On **World No Tobacco Day**, the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is supporting new legislation to further restrict access to vapes, particularly by children in Australia.



RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski, said that both smoking and vaping creates significant risks for life-threatening disease.

“The long-term use of cigarettes has created terrible health issues in rural communities,” **Dr Lewandowski** said.

“And while rates of cigarette smoking are falling (slowly) they remain higher the further you head into the bush.

“But what we are now seeing is a growing cohort of young people taking up vaping instead of smoking.

“The vaping industry has shamelessly targeted youth to create a new wave of addiction and a lifetime of profits.

“Most adults who smoke start when they are children or young adults, and most lifetime users become addicted before the age of 21 years.

“Most concerningly with vapes, manufacturers are actively seeking to make these products more appealing to youth, flavouring them with child-friendly flavours like bubblegum or fruit and creating sleek designs, with child-friendly packaging and imagery,” Dr Lewandowski said.

“While Australia is leading the way globally with vaping regulation, companies rapidly launch new products that sidestep, or are not included, in current laws, and use every available means to expand their market.”

In response to growing concern around young people vaping, the Australian Government has changed how vapes are regulated. Changes as of March 2024 include:

- a ban on the importation of all vapes (with and without nicotine, and including rechargeable devices) **without** an import licence and permit
- specific product requirements for imported vapes, with flavours limited to mint, menthol or tobacco.

RDAA supports the Australian Medical Association (AMA) along with school and parent groups in calling for the federal government's next stage of vaping reform to be supported in the Senate.

"The latest reforms have been a great start," Dr Lewandowski said. "Studies in the United States have found that more than 70% of youth e-cigarette users would quit if the products were only available in tobacco flavour.

"Unfortunately, vaping is becoming normalised in our schools, and the latest vaping reforms going to the Senate at the moment would ban the importation, manufacture, supply, commercial possession and advertisement of disposable single-use and non-therapeutic vapes.

"Reducing widespread access would help remove vapes from school environments, and still enable GPs to providing evidence-based care for people dealing with nicotine addiction.

"Australians in rural communities remain highly vulnerable to smoking and vaping addiction, and our patients have less access to care to treat and manage the health impacts of these damaging practices," Dr Lewandowski said.

"With the legislation already passing the House of Representatives, RDAA calls for bipartisan support for these measures in the Senate to protect all Australians from harm by the vaping and tobacco industry."

A high resolution photo of Dr RT Lewandowski is [available here](#).

Available for interview: RDAA President, Dr RT Lewandowski
RDAA CEO, Peta Rutherford (via contacts below)
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