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MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

## Federal Liberal Party votes for a further review of vaping

In a major turnaround, the federal Liberal Party took the first step towards legalising vaping today by voting for an independent scientific inquiry.

In today's Liberal party room meeting, the Health Minister Greg Hunt agreed to commission an inquiry into the scientific evidence on vaping, possibly by the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University.

The Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association ([ATHRA](#)) welcomes this important development. According to Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, chairman of ATHRA 'This is a positive first step towards legalising the use of nicotine for vaping in Australia.'

Australia's ban on vaping has left it out of step with other western, industrialised countries. 'Smoking rates are falling in those countries, while in Australia smoking rates have stalled since 2013. In fact, smoking rates have increased in [NSW](#) and [South Australia](#) in the most recent state surveys' Dr Mendelsohn said.

Support has been growing in the Liberal Party as the evidence on the public health benefits of vaping has been accumulating. Trent Zimmerman who chaired the recent Parliamentary Inquiry has been the main driver of change. Senator Bridget McKenzie (Minister for Rural Health), Senator James Paterson, Tim Wilson and Senator Eric Abetz have also been strong supporters.

The decision by the federal Liberals follows the recent [decision](#) by the WA state Liberal Party to call for the legalisation of vaping at its state conference.

The UK [House of Commons Science and Technology Committee](#) reviewed the evidence on vaping last month and strongly supported the widespread use of vaping. It concluded that if smokers could not quit, 'they should switch to e-cigarettes as a considerably less harmful alternative'.

The National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health has not taken a public position on vaping and is well placed to do an independent analysis of the evidence to help guide future policy.

According to Dr Mendelsohn 'Vaping with nicotine could help many Australian smokers who are otherwise unable to quit. The overseas evidence is very compelling and Australian smokers should not be denied this lifesaving opportunity'

**ENDS**

### Contact

Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn  
Chairman, Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association  
M: 0415 976 783 | E: [c.mendelsohn@unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.mendelsohn@unsw.edu.au)

## What is ATHRA?

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA) is a health promotion charity. ATHRA was established to improve public health by raising awareness of tobacco harm reduction to reduce the harm from tobacco smoking in Australia. ATHRA's aim is to provide evidence-based information on safer alternatives to smoking such as vaping, so smokers who want to quit can make informed choices.

### Board members of ATHRA

ATHRA is managed by the Board of Directors, which consists of four independent medical practitioners and one consumer representative. Directors receive no financial reimbursement or other benefit from ATHRA. None of the directors have ever had any financial or commercial relationship with any electronic cigarette or tobacco company.

Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, Chairman  
School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney

Dr Alex Wodak AM  
Emeritus Consultant, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney  
President, Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation

Dr Joe Kosterich  
General Practitioner, Perth

Dr Catherine Silsbury  
Addiction Medicine Specialist, Sydney

Stephen Elsom  
Consumer representative

### Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

11 Carlotta Rd, Double Bay 2028  
T: 0401 113 0372 E: [colin@athra.org.au](mailto:colin@athra.org.au)  
W: [www.athra.org.au](http://www.athra.org.au) (under construction)

ATHRA is registered as a charity with the  
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits  
Commission | ABN 72 6222 11223



**Directors:** A/Prof Colin Mendelsohn | Dr Alex Wodak AM | Dr Joe Kosterich | Dr Catherine Silsbury | Mr Stephen Elsom