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MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

## Australian psychiatrists support legalising vaping for smokers who can't quit

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) supports making vaping with nicotine available for Australian smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit.

In its new Position Statement on vaping the RANZCP, which represents 85% of practising psychiatrists in Australia, supports legalising nicotine as a non-prescription consumer product along with regulations that are proportional to their level of risk.

The statement is strongly supported by the health promotion charity, the [Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association](#) (ATHRA). According to Chairman, Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, 'Vaping may be of special benefit to people living with mental illness as many are unable to stop smoking tobacco and vaping can give them the nicotine they need in a safer form.'

'Smoking rates in people with severe mental illness have not decreased over the last 20 years. People living with mental illness have high smoking rates, smoke more heavily and have greater difficulty quitting. Smoking is the leading cause of the poorer health and mortality outcomes suffered by this group.'

According to the College, although the level of risk from vaping is likely to be far less than smoking regular cigarettes, there are still some uncertainties and more research is needed. However, in the meanwhile it says:

'This does not justify withholding what is, on the current evidence, a lower-risk product from existing smokers while such data is solicited'

The College recognises that smoking rates in Australia have not declined recently for the first time in decades and that more needs to be done. 'Tobacco harm reduction is an essential component of any policy framework that aims to improve health outcomes for people who smoke'.

The College supports the potential use of vaping for cannabis as well as tobacco as a way of reducing the harm in those who wish to continue using it.

The Position Statement notes the growing evidence for the success of vaping overseas. Results from large population surveys and clinical trial are encouraging. Also, 'smoking rates continue to fall among young people in countries that have widespread access to vaping products... coinciding with continuing declines in youth tobacco smoking rates' it said.

Dr Mendelsohn said, 'Smoking is the leading cause of the poor health and shorter life spans of people living with mental illness and some other disadvantaged groups. Vaping is a social justice issue. It could really help to improve health and financial inequalities if it was made more easily accessible.'

Currently it is illegal to possess or use nicotine liquid for vaping in Australia without a prescription.

**ENDS**

## Position statement

E-cigarettes and vaporisers. RANZCP Position Statement, 2018

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## What is ATHRA?

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA) is a registered health promotion charity established to reduce the harm from tobacco smoking in Australia. ATHRA aims to raise awareness of less harmful alternatives for adult smokers who are otherwise unable to quit. ATHRA's broader goal is to encourage the complete cessation of tobacco smoking in Australia. For more information, visit [www.athra.org.au](http://www.athra.org.au).

ATHRA is funded by unconditional donations from businesses and the general public. It does not accept donations from tobacco companies or their subsidiaries.

None of the directors has ever had any financial or commercial relationship with any electronic cigarette or tobacco company.

### Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

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ATHRA is registered as a charity with the  
Australian Charities and Not-for-profits  
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