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**MEDIA RELEASE:**

## **First ever “Switch to vaping” campaign launched in Australia**

The first ever Australian campaign that encourages adult tobacco smokers who can’t or won’t quit to switch to vaping to reduce the harm from smoking has been launched in Australia.

The campaign - “Switch2Vaping” - has been developed by leading Australian tobacco harm reduction advocates at a time when data from Australia’s latest National Health Survey confirms that smoking rates have plateaued in Australia.

According to the latest national survey this month<sup>1</sup>, 15.2% of Australians adults smoked in 2017-18 compared to 16% three years ago. These findings are consistent with other Australian national and state surveys which have shown that smoking rates have stagnated nationally since 2013<sup>2</sup> and are rising in NSW<sup>3</sup> and SA<sup>4</sup>.

According to Conjoint Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, Chairman of the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA), the time has come to try new approaches and to educate Australian smokers about the health and financial benefits that would result from a switch to vaping.

“If current smokers who can’t or won’t quit are able to make the transition to vaping, then the evidence is quite clear. They’ll feel better, save a lot of money and expose themselves to much less harm than they do by smoking cigarettes,” said Dr Mendelsohn.

“Vaping is the most popular quitting aid in the United Kingdom, United States and European Union and has helped millions of smokers quit. This option should also be available for Australian smokers” Dr Mendelsohn said. “Vaping is not risk-free, but scientists agree that it is far less harmful than smoking”.

According to the UK [Royal College of Physicians](#) report in 2016 “the hazard to health arising from long-term vapour inhalation from the e-cigarettes available today is unlikely to exceed 5% of the harm from smoking tobacco”.

Michael Collins from Ryde in Sydney features in one of the vignettes prepared for the campaign. He switched to vaping in mid-2018 and says the benefits have been significant.

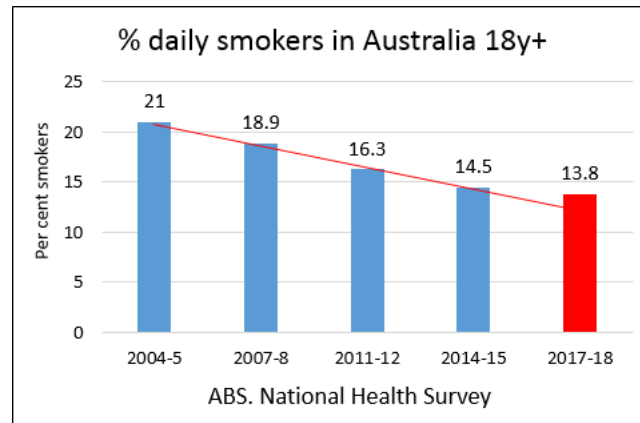
“Since I’ve switched to vaping I’ve been able to walk upstairs a lot easier. My old office was two flight of stairs to go up and I would feel short of breath going up those. Since I’ve switched to vaping my lung function has improved and climbing stairs is not an issue for me anymore. My sense of smell came back. It just felt healthier within weeks of stopping smoking. Plus I’m saving a lot of money. Cigarettes with the huge taxes are quite expensive for a pack. But I might spend just \$40 a week on vaping, so I’m saving a lot of money,” said Michael.

Australia is one of the most restrictive countries in the world when it comes to vaping. Regulations vary by state but it is essentially illegal to vape with nicotine in Australia without a doctor’s prescription.

ATHRA Director Joe Kosterich says this is acting as a major barrier to smokers accessing what is clearly a less harmful alternative to cigarettes.

“It is obviously more difficult to access vaping in Australia than other similar countries. But there are still legal avenues available to smokers who want to switch to vaping. This campaign will educate smokers who can’t or won’t quit smoking about how to legally make the transition to vaping in Australia,” said Dr Kosterich.

For more information about the campaign go to [www.athra.org.au/switchtovaping](http://www.athra.org.au/switchtovaping)



Data from National Health Surveys 2004-5 to 2017-18

**ENDS**

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#### References

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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 Commission | ABN 72 6222 11223

