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MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

Urgent action needed to address smoking, still Australia's biggest killer

The Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA) today welcomes the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report (1) which finds Australia's disease burden is falling. Any news that Australians are healthier and living longer is great news.

However, according to the report, **tobacco is still the single largest cause of disease burden in Australia** at 9.3% and this has not decreased since the last review 3 years ago.

Addressing Australia's smoking rate – stagnant since 2013 according to the AIHW National Drug Strategy Household Surveys (2) and the ABS National Health Surveys (3) – **must be an urgent health priority** and it must include vaping.

Around the world, we have seen the benefits of legalised vaping. Smoking rates in the US, UK, Canada and EU continue to fall, in some cases faster than ever. Only this week, the New Zealand Ministry of Health launched a website [here](#) to inform smokers about vaping and to encourage them to make the switch to the less harmful alternative.

Reviews of the evidence by Public Health England (PHE) suggest e-cigarettes are 95 per cent less harmful than combustible cigarettes (4) and contributed to **"tens of thousands" more people across England quitting successfully**. Recent studies have found that vaping is 2-3 times as effective as nicotine replacement therapy in helping smokers to quit. (5, 6) Yet Australia remains the only western democracy to ban the sale and use of nicotine for vaping.

Ten months ago, Minister Hunt announced a scientific inquiry into vaping at the ANU, on which we are yet to receive an update.

There is no information available about the terms of reference of this inquiry, if it will be accepting expert submissions, the time frame and if it has even started.

Australia cannot afford announcement after announcement with no follow through when it comes to public health policy, as the tobacco epidemic continues unabated.

As Professor John Newton of PHE said, **"It would be tragic if thousands of smokers who could quit with the help of an e-cigarette are being put off due to false fears about safety."**

I would love the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

ENDS

Contact

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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.

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

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

References

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ATHRA is registered as a charity with the
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