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MEDIA RELEASE: for immediate release

Board of directors
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Greg Hunt's e-cigarette delay will cost Australian lives

Revelations in parliament on Wednesday that a secretive government-commissioned scientific study into e-cigarettes has no terms of reference and will not be completed until December 2020 shows the government's contempt for Australians wanting to quit smoking. (1)

Conjoint Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn, from the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association (ATHRA), said that any further delay in introducing vaping in Australia would ultimately cost lives.

"Minister for Health Greg Hunt announced last year that the Australian Government had commissioned the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at Australian National University (ANU) to conduct a public health assessment of vaping.

"It has now emerged that the study will take two years to complete which is an excessive amount of time for a review of this type.

"Sadly, in the two years this study takes 38,000 Australians will die as a result of smoking-related disease.

"Bizarrely, it has also transpired that there are no terms of reference for the review, despite granting the NCEPH \$750,000 to conduct it.

"ATHRA is concerned at the secretive way in which this issue has been handled and is more concerned that Minister Hunt is using the study as a delaying mechanism to indefinitely avoid legalising vaping.

"The result of Minister Hunt's delays is to deny Australian smokers access to a far safer alternative to smoking which is proven to help smokers quit. A recent randomised controlled trial found that smokers using a vaping device were twice as likely to quit as smokers using nicotine replacement therapy such as nicotine patches and gum. (2)

"Safer smokefree technologies such as vaping are legal and approved in every other western democracy, based on the very same evidence that this study is now reviewing.

"The UK and New Zealand governments are actively encouraging smokers to switch to vaping as they know it can save lives.

"Australia remains a global outlier when it comes to tobacco harm reduction," Professor Mendelsohn said today.

To read ATHRA's full statement on this issue, please visit:

<https://athra.org.au/blog/2019/08/01/finally-information-about-the-scientific-inquiry-into-vaping-but-questions-remain/>

ENDS

References

- 1) Hansard, Senate Questions without Notice. 31/7/2019
https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansards/91962b64-398e-400e-ae19-98cf415623ec/&sid=0179
- 2) Hajek P. A randomised trial of e-cigarettes versus nicotine replacement therapy. New England Journal of Medicine 2019
Available here: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1808779>

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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 smoking or nicotine. 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 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.

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association

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ATHRA is registered as a charity with the
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