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Proposed law to clear the air on e-cigarettes

Friday, 13 March 2020

E-cigarettes, or vaping, would also be banned in smoke free areas across the city under a proposal to be considered by City of Melbourne Councillors next week.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the proposed amendment would bring the city's local laws into line with the State Tobacco Act – which already includes e-cigarettes in smoking restrictions.

"We know the terrible toll that smoking takes on our community, including 4000 Victorians who die from smoking-related illnesses each year," the Lord Mayor said.

"E-cigarettes are relatively new, but we know that there is a possible link to serious lung disease and growing evidence that e-cigarettes can lead young people to start smoking regular cigarettes.

"It's also particularly concerning to see e-cigarettes becoming more popular with young people, with one in five students aged 16 to 17 having tried e-cigarettes.

"This change to the local law would mean e-cigarettes would be banned anywhere that smoking is banned in the City of Melbourne, making smoke-free areas simpler for everyone to understand."

Since Bourke Street became smoke-free last October, more than 60,000 people have enjoyed a healthier, safer, more welcoming atmosphere at this popular Melbourne destination each day.

Chair of the People City portfolio, Councillor Beverley Pinder, said including e-cigarettes in designated smoke-free areas sends a clear message that vaping is not a safe-alternative to smoking.

"E-cigarettes are often marketed as a way to help smokers to quit, or as a 'safe alternative' to regular cigarettes, but health experts agree that there simply isn't the evidence to support these claims," Cr Pinder said.

"E-cigarette liquids contain a range of chemical ingredients and flavours that haven't been proven safe to inhale, and aren't regulated, so you really don't know what you're inhaling."

If endorsed, the proposed change to the local law would go through a public notice, submissions and assessment process, before returning to Council for final consideration later this year.

There are 11 designated smoke-free areas within the City of Melbourne, including Bourke Street, Goldsbrough Lane, QV Melbourne, The Causeway, Howey Place, Equitable Place, Block Place, The Tan running track, Princes Park running track, Collins Way and Fulham Place.

Smoking (including e-cigarettes) is banned in outdoor dining areas under State Government laws introduced in August 2017.

The fine for vaping or smoking in a smoke-free area is \$100. The City of Melbourne has not yet issued any fines for smoking in Bourke Street as the focus has been on education as people adjust to the change.

People found littering cigarette butts anywhere in the city face heavier fines: \$330 for an unlit butt and \$660 for a lit butt.

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