

Submission: **The Use and Marketing of Electronic Cigarettes and Personal Vaporisers in Australia**

I am female and aged 58. I started smoking at the age of 12. Three years ago and stumbled onto vaping as an alternative to cigarettes. This has been life changing.

Towards the end of my smoking years, I was waking in the middle of the night for that nicotine hit; I was tired and felt physically exhausted. The coughing was constant and interfering with my job on the phones in a customer service role. When I was smoking I felt that my health was OK, not having experienced any major health dramas. Three months after giving up cigarettes I noticed a dramatic difference in my lung capacity and general wellbeing. I was able to sing without being short of breath, I was able to round up the sheep without being short of breath and the puffing and struggling to get a decent breath stopped. I was exercising more and started to lose weight. I can honestly say that since I was 12 years old I had never felt better. I no longer had to worry about how I smelt; the stench of stale cigarette smoke was no longer in my clothes or house.

I noticed that overall I was taking less days of work due to feeling “under the weather”. Since ceasing cigarettes I have not had bronchitis or constant colds throughout winter.

Before I took the plunge into vaping I read everything I could find relating to the subject, because I wanted to make sure I was not jumping from the pan into the fire. I started to notice a pattern in the various studies that were put out that were demonising e-cigarettes and their contents. The pattern I saw showed that virtually all the reports were not conducted using common equipment or ingredients, they were over exaggerated and these reports were easily discredited by further reports from other sources. So, for me, the decision was easy.

It concerns me that there may be influential businesses behind the movement to ban or heavily control e-cigarette use in Australia. I ask if perhaps e-cigarettes were legal and encouraged, who has the most to lose financially. I would hope that the Australian Government would put their citizens first, before the financial wants of some big business.

I currently import my nicotine from overseas, I would prefer to be able to purchase it here and see it available in different concentrations, because everyone who vapes is different in their needs.

I have found it invaluable to be able to go into a vape shop and talk with experts. This has enabled me to cut down on the amount of nicotine I was vaping, their expertise has shown me better and more efficient ways to vape and in turn this is a benefit to my health.

It is interesting to watch people come in to these shops for the first time. They come in, not quite believing that they can give up cigarettes by using an e-cigarette, but they are also seeking a safer alternative. Inevitably, they purchase an e-cigarette kit and are probably like me when I started, it was a dual effort between cigarettes and e-cigarettes, but, within weeks, cigarettes lost their appeal and tasted disgusting and it becomes very easy to just switch.

Stopping these shops and forcing the vendors to hide everything does not seem logical. The Australian Government has reported on how much cigarette smokers cost the health resources of this country, so why is this safer alternative being forced to hide? The Government should be encouraging people to start vaping and allowing vendors to assist those who want a better and healthy life for themselves.

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When I first started vaping there were no vape shops. I had to rely on the internet and import everything from overseas. It was a lot of trial and error, but now being able to visit a shop, talk and learn I have been able to convince my husband, a smoker of 45+ years to start vaping. He refuses to buy from internet sites, he wants to talk to someone about his needs and get them to show him what his options are. If those shops were not around now, he would still be smoking cigarettes.

Personally I don't believe that vaping will encourage people to smoke or encourage young people to take up cigarettes, they are not similar and vaping is not really that cool, it is just a smarter way for smokers to stop smoking cigarettes and improve their health.

Please don't deny other smokers the chance to change their lives and please don't deny vapers the opportunity to vape. If I was forced to go back to smoking, I know that it would affect my health two fold due to my age. I want to keep living a healthier, happy life and to be able to make the choices for my life, that I feel are right. I want to be able to vape without guilt and to feel proud that I have managed to rid myself of a habit that kills.

How can New Zealand get it so right, and Australia get it so wrong?