

I will be 66 years of age this year, I started smoking at the age of 14.

No adverse effects of my smoking habit was felt until my mid 30s as I had no heart or chest issues that worried me. However, as I approached middle age, I started noticing a feeling of breathlessness for no apparent reason. I spoke to my GP and he recommended Ventolin sprays, I did tell him I was a mild smoker about a quarter of a packet a day and in those days, the GPs did not know all that much about the harm that cigarettes cause and my GP was a pipe smoker himself.

One day when hiking with family and friends, I was about 45 years of age at the time, on somewhat steep and rugged terrain I had one heck of a fright. I was almost totally breathless and my heart was pounding so hard that I thought I could be in for a heart attack and it took over three quarters of an hour for things to settle with rest.

This was a terrible scare. I spoke to another GP about this as I had relocated to another state and she said it was the culmination of my years of smoking. She recommended various nicotine replacement patches, sprays and gums which did next to nothing to relieve my nicotine cravings. I developed an itchy rash using nicotine patches and was told I was allergic to the adhesive used. The oral sprays and gum made me nauseous. The Campix product made me quite ill and my GP advised not to use it.

An acquaintance of mine at work introduced me to a pen style e-cigarette which he imported from overseas and it had nicotine liquid in it which he also imported. I tried this device, the liquid contained 24mg content on nicotine and that did satisfy my nicotine craving this happened in 2010. Yes, whilst at first when using the product, the e-cigarette, I was still drawn to have a regular cigarette but after three weeks of using this device I started to dislike cigarettes

immensely and have been indulging in the use of this device and others that produce the same result ever since.

My initial nicotine fluid as stated was 24 mg in content. I am pleased to say that now being 2017 I am down to using nicotine fluid as low as 4mg in content and there are days when not stressed I can go without the use of the devices at all.

As a result of using this device, and even at my present age, I am now able to lead an active life, play squash and go bush walking without shortness of breath or heart palpitations. How I wish I had heard of these e-cigarettes a lot earlier in life.

Different people may, depending on their smoking patterns, need higher nicotine content to help them overcome the nicotine urge. 24 mg was sufficient for me. What I feel uneasy about is having to import this nicotine liquid known as e-juice from overseas suppliers and having sampled quite a few over the years from several countries I am concerned about their content and manufacturing standards. I would like to see nicotine e-juice manufactured in Australia with our high quality standards.

The sale of these devices and e-juice should be restricted to persons of adult smoking age the same restrictions applicable as to tobacco product sales.

They should be available at all outlets that sell alternative nicotine replacement products and people should have the right to choose which product they wish to purchase to help them quit smoking. Having read research done in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, where these devices are now being legalized with nicotine content by the way, research in other countries, I do tend to agree that these products whilst not totally safe in Tobacco Harm Reduction, they are at least 95% safer than smoking.

These e-cigarettes certainly helped me quit smoking and I fell 100% better for their use. Why the Australian Government is so adamant in not allowing these life saving devices with nicotine is to me blatantly obvious. The income cigarettes generate, is in the vicinity of 80% excise tax as well as GST on the sale of a packet of cigarettes or any tobacco product. Whereas, States, where the aforementioned devices are legally sold without nicotine content, generate only 10% GST revenue.

Dare I suggest that the Australian Government is guilty of duplicity?

They want Tobacco Harm Reduction on one hand and want the revenue that cigarette sales generate. The other factor that needs to be considered, with the ever increasing taxes on cigarettes, people of low income are either going without food and other essential needs and what is worse now doing crime to support their habit. Cigarette related robberies are on the increase. Nearly on par with drug related crimes where people need money to support their habits.

In closing, I submit, that if the Federal Minister for Health, and the State Ministers for Health were genuinely interested in Tobacco Harm Reduction and the health of the Australian smoking population they should allow the sale of these products under the same stringent control as cigarettes are currently sold.

Thank you for the time in reading my submission and I hope the Hon.Minister does see the real benefit to the Australian Smoking population by the use of this product.

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