

QoN 015-05 What is your response to people who say that tight regulation of vaping protects cigarette companies and is not in the interests of public health?

There is no basis or evidence for this assertion, which seems to be based on the proposition that e-cigarettes are “disruptive” for the tobacco industry.

The reality is (as noted elsewhere in our comments) that tobacco companies have been developing and promoting novel products for several decades – and e-cigarettes should be seen in this context.

In 1952, the public was assured by the tobacco industry that, “The Manufacturers.....have in hand a programme of chemical research into the constituents of tobacco and tobacco smoke which was started some time ago.....they are intensifyingthis research.....and all their resources will be used to complete this work in the shortest possible space of time”.

In 1953 they asserted that, “If it should ever be proved that there exists something harmful in cigarettes, even in the minutest quantities which could conceivably make smokers into one of the causes of this disease (lung cancer), we should, I hope, be the first to take steps to eliminate it.”

Seven decades on, we hear similar claims about health concerns.

All the major tobacco companies have e-cigarette products which they seek to market as part of their product range, and to assist in promoting both their image and their other products. It is clear (even from submissions to this Committee, such as that from British American Tobacco) that the companies are not marketing e-cigarettes as a genuine cessation aid, but rather as a complementary product to add to their range.

The development of e-cigarettes has enabled tobacco companies, which have a long history of lies and deceit, to promote themselves – completely falsely – as interested in and even as appropriate advisers on public health matters, and to circumvent Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to which Australia is one of the 181 signatory countries. Article 5.3 and its Guidelines state clearly that: “In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law”, and “There is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry’s interests and public health policy interests”.

Any suggestion that tobacco companies are interested in reducing sales from their “core” product are absurd – they simply want to sell as much as possible of whatever they can. They are aware that e-cigarettes are not an effective population cessation aid; that nicotine is addictive; and that they are a gateway product for children and young people.

Crucially also, tobacco companies are revelling in the role of e-cigarettes and other novel products as distractions from the measures that will reduce smoking. If there were any credibility to suggestions that this industry is interested in reducing smoking, the companies would cease all forms of tobacco promotion and sales. Instead, they both opposed

measures that will reduce smoking, and continue marketing both cigarettes and e-cigarettes to vulnerable countries, populations and age groups.