

2 August 2017

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Re Vaporised Nicotine Products Bill 2017

Dear Committee members

I write as a private citizen with no links to organisations with vested interests in this Bill.

My interest in this matter is a result of my exposure to vaping some 5 years ago. At that stage I was 58 years old and had been smoking cigarettes since I was 15.

Never a heavy smoker, at worst I smoked no more than 10 cigarettes a day, but even then it was impossible to give up. The addiction was treated with hypnotism and later nicotine substitutes in the form of lozenges and chewing gum.

Whilst the nicotine replacement reduced my desire to smoke, they didn't really work in stopping me smoking. I ended up taking nicotine in its oral form and smoking cigarettes.

I first tried vaping some 4 years ago. As I was unable to buy nicotine in Australia, I imported some from the USA along with some of the other paraphernalia required to vape. The nicotine I bought was 100mg/ml which is a lot of nicotine. In fact, that concentration of nicotine could have disastrous effects if it was in the wrong hands and dispensed to people through the water supply or other means. I believe that Gadaafi was sourcing nicotine to use as a weapon before he was killed.

Anyway, I was able to mix up my own vaping mixture to deliver 6mg/ml nicotine which is a far less harmful dose and more in-line with the concentration found in some conventional cigarettes.

I mixed the concentrated nicotine with glycerine and propylene glycol to achieve that lesser dose of 6mg/ml. To that I added various flavourings that I bought from the USA. I have not had a cigarette since I started vaping, however, my health has significantly changed.

During 2014 I was becoming increasingly breathless and was eventually diagnosed as having interstitial pulmonary disease – a chronic disease that compromises my ability to breathe, particularly on exertion. There was some discussion amongst my doctors as to the cause of the disease. It seems that the consensus was that I had a reactive form of pneumonitis that was considered to be most likely caused by exposure to rodents (my daughter had guinea pigs and rabbits at the time). None of my specialists consider the vaping to have contributed to this problem.

It would appear that there is no correlation between vaping and the disease I have, however, at the back of my mind I am very suspicious about the flavouring that I used in my vaping mix. I am unable to find any evidence that gives credence to my suspicions but nonetheless they remain.

Now I vape but don't use any flavourings. Because I am tested regularly I know that there has been no further pulmonary degradation.

So I can conclude that vaping may be as addictive as smoking (as we would expect because, after all, it is the nicotine to which we get addicted. However, vaping completely satisfies making the need to continue smoking a non-issue. Whilst I know it is probably silly to continue vaping, I do and there is no evidence that it has had any effect on my lungs.

I understand that many public health practitioners are against vaping. The normalisation of vaping in society with the concomitant adoption of it by young people should be avoided. However, while cigarettes are still available, there still exists the role modelling of the smoker to influence young people. If children are to smoke – vaping would appear to be a better option.

The non-availability of nicotine in liquid form to buy in Australia for vaping is silly. It can be bought elsewhere and solid forms are easily available from chemist/vitamin/shampoo sales outlets. If it were banned, the effort required to keep it out of the country would be a questionable use of resources.

In conclusion – Allow vaping in Australia; allow the purchase of nicotine in diluted form from 0-21mg/ml from registered/legitimised suppliers; discourage the visibility and advertisement of vaping through the media; stop the monopoly that providers of solid nicotine currently have; continue to fund research into the effects of vaping and any flavourings that are added to mixtures.

Don't let big tobacco dominate the marketplace for nicotine distribution. They will do what they did with cigarettes and get as many people they can to be addicted. Encourage vaping as a cottage industry restricted to minors and away from the public gaze. Finally, watch out for the importation of very concentrated nicotine products, they can be as deadly as guns and bombs.