

QoN 014-04

Your submission talks about weak regulation being a ‘*trojan horse*’. What risks do you see from taking a more relaxed approach to vaping in Australia – such as allowing nicotine liquids to be sold domestically in vape shops?

Response: Fortuitously for the timing of this question, a new study from the US longitudinal Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health study has just been published: Brouwer AF et al. Transitions between cigarette, ENDS and dual use in adults in the PATH study (waves 1–4): multistate transition modelling accounting for complex survey design. Tobacco Control 2020 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-055967> (“ENDS” means Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems)

Some findings and conclusions from the paper include:

“Cigarette use was persistent, with 89.7% (95% CI 89.1% to 90.3%) of exclusive cigarette users and 86.1% (95% CI 84.4% to 87.9%) of dual users remaining cigarette users (either exclusive or dual) after any one year.”

“In contrast, ENDS use was less persistent, with 72.1% (95% CI 69.6% to 74.6%) of exclusive ENDS users and 50.5% (95% CI 47.8% to 53.3%) of dual users remaining ENDS users (either exclusive or dual) after one wave.”

The authors “found that 20.8% (95% CI 18.2% to 23.3%) of exclusive ENDS users transitioned to non-current use by the subsequent wave, and 45.2% (95% CI 42.4% to 47.9%) of dual users transitioned to exclusive cigarette use.”

In other words: the vast majority of smokers who vape keep using cigarettes; one in five exclusive ENDS users quit, and three in five (58%) of dual users (about half of all ENDS users in Australia) drop ENDS and go back to cigarettes after two years.

Also:

“Exclusive ENDS users (including never cigarette users or non-current cigarette users) were more than 20 times more likely to be using cigarettes in the subsequent wave than never users (25% vs 1% transition in one wave) and about five times more likely than non-current users (25% vs 6% transition in one wave). In contrast, dual users were only about two times more likely to not be using cigarettes in the subsequent wave than exclusive cigarette users (18% vs 10% transition in one wave). These results suggest that ENDS may have been used to replace cigarettes by some users. ***However, in the market as currently regulated—as opposed to, for example, use only by prescription in a tobacco cessation programme—ENDS use may be facilitating cigarette initiation and relapse among adults.***” (our emphasis)