

**Statement from Maurice Swanson OAM MHP BSc Chief Executive, Australian Council on Smoking and Health, to the Select Committee on Tobacco Harm Reduction, 19 November 2020.**

Thank you for the opportunity to present to this Senate Inquiry.

My name is Maurice Swanson. I am the Chief Executive of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH).

First, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land from which I am presenting today, the Wardandi people of the Noongar Nation, and pay my respects to their elder's past, present, and emerging.

I have worked in tobacco control for 40 years in various leadership roles with the Health Department of Western Australia, the National Heart Foundation and now ACOSH.

The most effective approach to tobacco harm reduction is to protect young people from smoking and implement a comprehensive range of evidence-based measures that have effectively reduced smoking in Australia.

As stated in our submission, the evidence, where reviewed and presented systematically by independent health authorities, has consistently shown that use of e-cigarettes and other novel products pose significant health harms and risks to the Australian population, with no conclusive evidence of a health benefit.

Key research findings supporting Australia's precautionary position on e-cigarettes include evidence that:

- young non-smokers who initiate e-cigarette use are three times more likely than non-e-cigarette users to take up smoking;
- former smokers who use e-cigarettes are twice as likely to relapse back to smoking than non-e-cigarette users;
- e-cigarettes are either ineffective as a cessation aid or no more effective than safer alternatives including those approved for therapeutic use; and
- e-cigarette use in Australia is highest among teenagers and young adults.

Novel nicotine delivery devices that are being relentlessly lobbied for by the tobacco and related industries are a massive distraction from activities that have significantly reduced smoking in Australia over the past 40 years.

It is essential that Australian governments continue to focus on evidence-based strategies that have been proven to reduce the prevalence of smoking in both adults and children and reduce the burden of tobacco-caused disease on the health system and the community.

These strategies include well-funded and sustained public education programs, support for increases in tobacco tax, further prohibitions on the marketing of tobacco products, expansion of smoke-free public places, support for plain packaging, systemic provision of support for smoking cessation through all levels of our health system, and special programs for disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.