

Wednesday, 30 November 2022

AMA welcomes government moves to tighten tobacco and vaping laws

The Australian Medical Association today welcomed federal government plans to tighten tobacco and e-cigarettes laws saying the failure to address lax laws by previous governments had been a lost public health opportunity.

Health and Aged Care Minister Mark Butler announced today a “patchwork quilt” of tobacco-related laws, regulations, instruments and court decisions would be streamlined into a single Act of Parliament. He also announced the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) would lead a public consultation on the current regulatory framework for e-cigarettes.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said today’s announcement couldn’t come soon enough as tobacco smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia.

“The failure to address lax laws curbing the tobacco and vaping industry over the last decade was a lost opportunity in public health policy, which has created the next generation of young people addicted to nicotine,” Professor Robson said.

“It’s a terrible blight on the future health of these people and Australia can and should do better.

“The AMA is pleased to see several proposed changes to cigarette products, including removing ingredients that make cigarettes more palatable, removing misleading names that imply cigarettes are healthy such as “organic”, and adding a “smoking kills” message on to each cigarette.”

The AMA also welcomed measures to increase transparency in tobacco company advertising, promotion, and sponsorship activities. The AMA believes all forms of public promotion and marketing of tobacco and e-cigarette products should be banned.

Professor Robson welcomed the TGA consultation which will determine whether further regulation on e-cigarettes is required.

“For some time we’ve called for improvements to e-cigarette regulation and the prescription-only nicotine vaping product model.

“The tobacco industry must not influence public health policy. It is heavily invested in e-cigarettes and has tried to hold back e-cigarette regulations. We need to see strong reform in this area, including a ban on personally importing these products into Australia, and removing aspects that make these products so attractive to kids, such as flavours and appealing packaging.”

The AMA looks forward to the release of the National Tobacco Strategy 2022–2030 and working with the TGA and government to ensure the reduction in harmful tobacco and e-cigarette use.

The AMA is calling for the following measures to improve regulation of nicotine vaping products:

- reducing the concentration limit from 100mg/ml to 20mg/ml, and introducing limits on the flavours and volume of nicotine that can be prescribed or ordered,
 - banning the importation of nicotine vaping products through the Personal Importation Scheme,
 - adding Nicotine Vaping Products to Real Time Prescription Monitoring programs,
 - restricting the use of Medicare smoking cessation items to a patient's usual doctor, consistent with previous advice provided by the AMA.
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