

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 0830 wst / 1030 aest Tuesday 29 August 2023

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Big tobacco & social media receive Dirty Ashtray & Exploding Vape awards

British American Tobacco (BAT) and Meta have been dishonourably distinguished with a Dirty Ashtray award and the inaugural Exploding Vape award at a ceremony in Perth this morning.

Presented by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), the annual awards are designed to spotlight industry and organisations which undermine Australia's tobacco and vaping control strategies.

British American Tobacco, the force behind Responsible Vaping Australia (RVA), received its award for initiating and financing a concerted astroturf * campaign to undermine public health policy on vaping in Australia.

Meta, the owners of Facebook, Instagram, Threads and WhatsApp, won its award for failing to enforce its own policy which bans the promotion of tobacco or nicotine products on its platforms.

ACOSH Co-CEO Laura Hunter said RVA is a front for British American Tobacco which wants vapes available in retail settings.

"BAT, through the RVA, pretends to be concerned about the black market in e-cigarettes and the rise in youth vaping.

"Hiding behind RVA, BAT has lobbied governments and co-opted various community sectors and organisations who may be unaware big tobacco is behind their astroturf lobby campaign. For this reason they are the worthy winners of the 2023 Dirty Ashtray Award.

"The inaugural 'Exploding Vape Award' exposes those who support and further the message of the tobacco industry. Meta has an unparalleled reach across the virtual world, and with it, enormous power to influence.

"In a policy proudly displayed on its website, Meta expressly commits to disallow e-cigarette advertising or promotion on its platforms. It only takes a few seconds to see this is not being enforced.

"Meta's platforms are being used to promote the use and sale of e-cigarettes, and making them easily accessible to a younger and younger audience," Ms Hunter said.

AMA President Professor Robson said the government had taken important steps to ban nicotine vaping products, and only allow access to them with a doctors' prescription.

"Tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia, while the evidence of health threats from e-cigarettes continues to grow, hooking younger generations onto an addictive product.

Media contacts: AMA: +61 427 209 753 media@ama.com.au

ACOSH: +61 466 305 652



[@ama_media](#)
[@tobaccofreeaust](#)



[@amapresident](#)



[@medicalassociation_au](#)



[AustralianMedicalAssociation](#)
[TobaccoFreeAustralia](#)



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"Big tobacco is still in big business and we saw its hand [attempt to undermine the TGA's recent vaping reform consultation](#). Hundreds of individual submissions parroted text from an astroturf campaign.

"The dirty ashtray and exploding vape awards illustrate the need to address unregulated advertising of nicotine products on social media and stop tobacco industry players from funding political and lobby groups.

"We in health, and our colleagues in tobacco control, stand behind the government in their rollout of new tobacco and vaping reforms for the sake of the health of all Australians," Professor Robson said.

Over one hundred representatives from the public health coalition fighting to reduce smoking and vaping in Australia attended the breakfast and were joined by Health and Aged Care minister, Mark Butler, and his state counterpart Amber Jade Sanderson. Minister Butler spoke about the government's next steps for tobacco control legislation.

NOTE:

** The World Health Organization defines astroturfing as the faking of a grassroots movement which in reality is controlled by a hidden multinational company or organisation, in this case tobacco and vaping companies.*

ACOSH will supply 1-3 photos of the award ceremony within 1 hour of the event close at 0900 wst / 1100 aest Tuesday 29 Aug.

Attached are images of the Dirty Ashtray and Exploding Vape awards for unlimited use.

See also Dropbox link to public vaping adverting on Instagram for use with appropriate explanation.
<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Vaping%20ads>

Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 media@ama.com.au

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 [AustralianMedicalAssociation](#)

 [@medicalassociation_au](#)