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Senator Marielle Smith
Chairperson
Senate Committee for Community Affairs Legislation
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Email: senator.marielle.smith@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Smith,

Re: *Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024.*

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) is writing to the Committee to express our strong support for the *Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024*.

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand, representing more than 7, 100 surgeons and 1, 300 surgical trainees and Specialist International Medical Graduates. RACS is a Member of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), a leading, independent, Australian tobacco control advocacy organisation. We support ACOSH's goal to create a tobacco-free and vape-free Australia.

The tobacco and vape industry has deliberately marketed vape products to young people, and vaping rates in Australia have increased significantly over recent years, particularly among children and young people¹. This is a worrying trend, given the inconclusive evidence regarding the efficacy and safety of vaping products, their possible long-term health effects and their impact on surgery².

RACS' concerns regarding vaping among Australian children and young people include:

- Over recent years, the rate of vaping in Australia has increased significantly, particularly among young people which is largely driven by ease of access and close proximity^{3,4,5}.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

² Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Proposals for a Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan. May 28, 2021.

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

⁴ Tuson M, Lizama N, Kameron C, Gazey A, Wood L. Vape stores in Western Australia: growth, proximity to schools and socio-economic gradient of density. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 2024:100118.

⁵ Watts, C., Egger, S., Dessaix, A., Brooks, A., Jenkinson, E., Grogan, P., & Freeman, B. (2022). Vaping product access and use among 14–17-year-olds in New South Wales: a cross-sectional study. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 46(6), 814-820.



- One in ten Australian children aged 14-17 years currently vape⁶.
- Most teenagers try vapes out of curiosity, not to quit smoking⁷.
- 87% of Australian adults support prohibiting the sale of vapes (with or without nicotine) to people under 18 years of age⁸.
- There are numerous established health harms from vaping. These include exposure to chemicals and toxins⁹ and adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and lungs¹⁰.
- The impact of e-cigarettes on different surgical procedures, notably spinal surgery and plastic and reconstructive surgical procedures that rely heavily on the vascularity of tissue, is unknown but potentially as harmful as cigarette smoke¹¹.
- Exposure to nicotine during adolescence has been associated with cognitive and behavioural impairment and lasting structural change in the brain¹².
- An analysis of four longitudinal studies that investigated the use of e-cigarettes and smoking found that not only are e-cigarettes not an effective tool for smoking cessation among adolescents, but they are associated with higher incidence of traditional cigarette smoking¹³.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the RACS Health Policy and Advocacy Committee at racs.advocacy@surgeons.org to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Mark Frydenberg FRACS, AM
Chair, Health Policy and Advocacy Committee
VIC Specialty Elected Councillor

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⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022-23: Electronic Cigarettes and vapes. Supplementary data tables. Canberra: AIHW, 2024.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Larcombe A, Allard S, Pringle P, et al. Chemical analysis of fresh and aged Australian e-cigarette liquids. *Med J Aust* 2022;216(1):27-32.

¹⁰ Banks E, Yazidjoglou A, Brown S, et al. Electronic cigarettes and health outcomes: umbrella and systematic review of the global evidence. *Medical Journal of Australia* 2023;218(6):267-75.

¹¹ Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Proposals for a Smokefree Aotearoa 2025 Action Plan. May 28, 2021.

¹² Castro EM, Lotfipour S, Leslie FM. Nicotine on the developing brain. *Pharmacol Res* 2023;190:106716; Wood L, Greenhalgh EM, Hanley-Jones S. 5.4 Adolescence and brain maturation. In: Scollo M, Winstanley M, eds. *Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues*. Melbourne: Cancer Council Victoria, 2019.

¹³ K Chatterjee, B Alzghoul, A Innabi et al. Is vaping a gateway to smoking: a review of the longitudinal studies. 2016. *Int J Adolesc Med Health*. Aug, 2016.