

My name is Brian Marlow and I am the Campaign Director for Legalise Vaping Australia. Legalise Vaping Australia is our nation's largest pro-vaping advocacy group with over 30,000 supporters across each and every state and territory. This grassroots campaign is supported by vapers and vape shop owners alike who all want to work together towards one clear aim: Legalising the sale of nicotine vaping in Australia to help the vaping community, and provide the 2,8 million existing smokers with a far less harmful option.

Whilst previous committee attendees have included health groups and multinational tobacco companies who **do not** represent the interests of the 250,000 strong vaping community, I would like to extend a thank you each committee member for allowing me to attend today and provide a voice on behalf of the thousands of vapers who have, until now, not been heard throughout this debate.

They are all former smokers and credit vaping with giving them a way out of tobacco. These are people who suffered through years of addiction and finally found a product that helps them end their deadly addiction to tobacco, yet in this state alone vapers could potentially face a fine of \$45,000 merely for possessing a product that our counterparts in the UK, the US, Canada, and New Zealand have all managed to legalise with risk-proportionate regulations in place.

As a bit of a short back story about why I got involved with this movement, I'd like to say that I myself do not vape. During my first job in a Mechanic workshop at the age of just 17 I took up smoking. I am one of the lucky ones who managed to quit that awful habit after seeing the effects it had on my grandmother and my mother. My mother has been a smoker her entire adult life, and took it up when she was just a teenager. Despite going through cancer treatment that almost killed her, my mother continues to smoke. Her addiction is so bad that I have personally seen her picking out old cigarettes from the trash just to find any unburnt tobacco, place it in another cigarette paper and keep smoking. Thankfully vaping has helped my mother reduce her smoking rates, but because of our archaic laws that force people to purchase their nicotine products online from overseas companies that may not adhere to the consumer standards we as Australians have all come to expect, she often reverts back to smoking due to a lack of supply. I have a personal stake in this campaign and I have worked on this campaign day in and day out because of that.

But I'm not just here to speak about my family's addiction issues. As mentioned before, this campaign has over 30,000 supporters across Australia who all have similar stories. Our survey of over 962 vapers and supporters tells us the vast majority of them are former smokers between the ages 25 – 54. They are from working class backgrounds and the majority of them have tried quitting through approved methods to no avail, but credit vaping with helping kick a habit they never thought they could beat. They have finally done the right thing, and have kicked tobacco products to the kerb, and do not ever want to go back. Yet despite the overseas consensus from our closest allies, health groups and regulatory bodies here in Australia continue to ignore them. In addition, it is now clear that Australia's current policies are not helping people quit and Australia's public health is suffering as a result.

In this state alone, people are experiencing first-hand the consequences of Australian governments failing to meet the National Tobacco Strategy targets to reduce smoking rates.

Despite millions of taxpayers' dollars spent on anti-smoking advertising, smoking quit rates have flatlined. In Western Australia, the daily smoking rate did not change between 2013 and 2016 (about 12 per cent) and according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' latest national account, cigarette consumption rose in 2017.

What is clear for smokers, their children and our community is that the same-old approach to public health of TV ad campaigns and 1800 numbers is not cutting it anymore. Australia needs to catch up with the rest of the world and help smokers quit for good; not with expensive TV and print ads, but with a legislative and regulatory regime that supports the sale of nicotine vaping products.

Smoke-free products – such as e-cigarettes or personal vaporisers – are already legal in Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The UK Government's own Public Health England says e-cigarettes are 95 per cent less harmful than smoking and recommends using smoke-free products as quit aids in its official guidance to doctors.

Finally, closer to home, a progressive research organisation, The McKell Institute, has just published a report on the case for legalisation and risk-proportionate regulation of vaping in Australia. In it, they highlight the urgent need to regulate vaping products as a consumer good, not as a therapeutic, medicinal or tobacco product, which is what we and our community of supporters have been arguing in favour of for far too long.

In fact, more than 60 studies show smoke-free alternatives like vaping and e-cigarettes are less harmful and can help to quit smoking for good.

These products contain far fewer harmful chemicals than cigarettes, because they do not burn tobacco and produce smoke, which is the biggest cancer risk for smokers. In the United States, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, the American Cancer Society and the US Annual Review of Public Health have also concluded that e-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than smoking; for smokers and families and children who might inhale second-hand smoke.

In spite of all this, these products are currently illegal in Australia. And here in Western Australia, vapers face a \$45,000 fine for trying to quit.

But please do not take my commentary as an attack on our quit smoking efforts. Both major political parties should be commended for tackling the absurdity of the status quo in which cigarettes are legal while nicotine vaping products remain illegal.

There have been some positive steps, and I am pleased to see the WA Liberal Party endorsing these products as a quit aid for smokers. The WA Parliament has also agreed to set up a Select Committee on Personal Choice and Community Safety to further investigate the issue. However, more needs to be done.

It is estimated that smoking-related illnesses cost Australia's health system over \$1.8 billion every year. The UK Royal College of Physicians has warned that Australia's current 'do nothing' approach will only perpetuate smoking rates and could lead to worse public health outcomes. Conversely, recent modelling published in the international journal *Epidemiology*

found that Legalising vaping in New Zealand was estimated to reduce healthcare costs of up to \$NZ3.4 billion or \$NZ780 per person.

I believe, our supporters believe, and the 250,000 strong vaping community firmly believe that it is time to legalise and properly regulate vaping to help reduce smoking rates in Western Australia, help current vapers access better products, and benefit the growing vaping industry which consists entirely of small to medium sized businesses and not multinational industries peddling products that kill 2 in 3 users. The health of smokers, their family members, and the wider community will be better for it.