

## NADA Position Statement: Nicotine Vaping Products

14 February 2024

### Summary

The Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA) is the peak organisation for non-government alcohol and other drugs agencies in NSW. We advocate for, strengthen, and support the sector. Our decisions and actions are informed by the experiences, knowledge, and concerns of our members.

The long-term effects of the use of Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs) are still relatively unknown. NVPs have a role in reducing harm for nicotine dependent people who intend to cease or reduce their use of harmful tobacco products.

Currently the information about NVP use that could provide guidance to the NGO AOD sector, including approaches to harm reduction and community education particularly for young people, is in its early stages of development.

Note: This statement relates to vaping products containing nicotine only.

### Key Messages

- Further research needs to be undertaken on the use of NVPs as a harm reduction and/or smoking cessation tool, and the short and long-term harms related to vaping.
- Evidence suggests that the most efficient method of quitting involves a combination of behavioural and pharmacological therapies (Cochrane, 2023 p10). NVP use for this purpose is still in its infancy and further research is required to clarify the role of NVPs in smoking cessation.
- Banning and restriction in use for individuals who use NVPs for harm reduction or smoking cessation can further stigmatise and may result in people being less likely to access AOD treatment.
- Bans and restrictions may promote an expansion of an unregulated market which eliminates any capacity for quality control or monitoring for substitute ingredients which may increase existing or cause other harms.
- Action needs to be taken in early intervention to delay the onset of vaping in people under 18 due to potential harms.
- Balancing regulation to reduce the supply and uptake to young people while increasing access for adults who wish to quit smoking would be beneficial.
- The input of people who use NVPs in shaping policy and guidelines for AOD treatment services would be valuable.

### Background

There has been a significant increase in the use of NVPs in recent years amongst all age groups. The National Drug and Alcohol Strategy Household Survey 2019 showed that while fewer people are smoking tobacco daily, the use of NVPs is increasing. Between 2016 and 2019, the proportion of people who had ever used NVPs rose from 8.8% to 11.3% (AIHW, 2019).

To date, there has been limited research on the efficacy of NVPs in smoking cessation.

NVPs are currently not recommended as the first-line treatment for smoking cessation (RACGP, 2023). While they may be of benefit to people who have unsuccessfully tried to cease smoking by pharmacological methods, there needs to be an evidence-informed and shared decision-making process to ensure current information is available and that people are making an informed decision when choosing NVPs as an option. Current research indicates that behavioural interventions combined with pharmacotherapy are most efficacious (Patnode, 2020).

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists supports the legalisation and regulation of NVPs to facilitate their use as harm reduction tools for people living with mental illness (RANZCP, 2018). While further research on the long-term effects is required, NVPs may provide a less harmful way of delivering nicotine to those who are unable, unwilling, or choosing not to cease smoking.

NADA supports the regulation of NVPs for use as a harm minimisation strategy for people who wish to reduce or cease tobacco smoking. Regulation should focus on manufacturers and suppliers. Advertising guidelines need to be developed to support evidence-based health education and early intervention strategies. NADA has identified that there are implications of the reduction of access to NVP for people currently using non prescribed vaping products. Support options will need to be identified and clearly articulated in health promotion messaging, to address the risk of people either commencing or returning to cigarette smoking. Health promotion strategies need to calculate and balance the risk of messages that emphasise the damaging impacts of vaping products with any potential public perception that smoking cigarettes is a safer alternative.

Consistent with previous research, Thoonen & Jongenelis found that initial use of NVPs in young people appears to be largely driven by curiosity, with flavouring and taste also identified as motivators. Regulation of supply and access, along with education and interventions for young people may lead to a reduction in harms associated with NVP use in young people.

## **Recommendations**

- Increased resources for further research on the efficacy of use of NVPs in smoking cessation
- Longitudinal studies to understand longer term impacts on health outcomes and effectiveness in smoking cessation.
- Development of evidence-based harm reduction education and clear guidelines for AOD treatment settings.
- Focus on harm minimisation and early intervention to delay the uptake of VNP in young people under the age of 18.
- Development of interventions to promote protective factors in youth and their care givers.
- Development of a formal mechanism to ensure that current evidence-based information is disseminated to frontline AOD, health and community workers, schools and other groups young people encounter, as it arises.

## **References**

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RANZCP Position Statement October 2018, Reference: PS#97

Thoonen, KAHJ & Jongenelis, MI. Motivators of e-cigarette use among Australian adolescents, young adults, and adults, *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 340, 2024, 116411, ISSN 0277-9536.

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