

Lung specialists support e-cigarette reforms, as new research reveals e-cigarettes link to lung cancer

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More than 1600 respiratory health professionals have today joined forces, standing in staunch support of the Australian Government's evidence-based reforms that if passed will protect the lung health of all Australians from the harms of e-cigarettes.

It comes as new research published in [Cancer Research](#) reveals that people who have never smoked but use e-cigarettes for a year or more, have similar cell level changes, usually seen in smokers' years before lung cancer develops.

"Lung cancer is already Australia's biggest cancer killer, placing considerable burden on our communities and healthcare system. We know it took decades before the link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer was definitively established. This new research raises the very alarming possibility e-cigarette use may also lead to lung cancer," warns Professor Anne Holland, President of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ).

"We must not make the same mistakes we made with cigarettes. The Government's vaping reforms are vital to protecting the health of Australians."

"The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated. It is the final piece that will allow the prescription pathway for e-cigarettes to work as intended. It will help protect a new generation from a lifetime of nicotine addiction, whilst facilitating an easier process for doctors and nurse practitioners to prescribe e-cigarettes in the limited circumstances where e-cigarettes are of clinical benefit," explains Professor Holland.

On the agenda at today's 2024 Annual Scientific Meeting for TSANZ is the growing evidence of e-cigarette harm and use in Australia. The meeting brings together leading experts in lung health – respiratory physicians, nurses, GPs, and allied health professionals – sharing new research and clinical expertise.

"It is important to realise that e-cigarettes are no silver bullet when it comes to stopping smoking. They perform only a little better than nicotine replacement therapy and only when used with professional behavioural support."

"We also know the vast majority of people using e-cigarettes, are certainly not using them as a therapeutic product to quit. Most e-cigarette users are under the age of 30, have never smoked, or might have only smoked for a few months or occasionally," Professor Holland continues.

"E-cigarettes are not safe. Health professionals specialising in lung health already see the dangerous consequences of young people vaping in clinics across the country. The immediate and long-term harm is unacceptable given the small and uncertain benefits to adult cessation efforts" said TSANZ Tobacco and Related Substances SIG convenor, Associate Professor Henry Marshall.

Dr Moya Vandeleur, deputy TSANZ SIG convenor and pediatric respiratory physician adds "evidence shows that vaping can lead to addiction, nicotine poisoning, seizures, burns and injuries, and of course coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, and permanent loss of lung functioning. It also threatens to undo the success we've had preventing younger generations from smoking, as we know non-smokers who vape are three times more likely to start smoking."

“Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into the early to mid-20s. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase the risk for future addiction to other drugs and has been associated with mental health symptoms such as depression. With this emerging evidence of possible links to lung cancer and vaping, we must take every step to ensure we are not jeopardizing the health of young Australians by failing to enforce a prescription access model for e-cigarettes.”

“This legislation transcends party politics, to protect current and future generations of Australians from serious harms like lung cancer. We urge all Senators to vote in favour of the Therapeutic Goods and Other Legislation Amendment (Vaping Reforms) Bill 2024 to protect the lung health of Australians” concludes Mr Vincent So, CEO of TSANZ.

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Experts available for interview at the TSANZSRS Conference, Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre, 22 – 26 March 2024.

Associate Professor Henry Marshall, FRACP PhD, is a senior staff Thoracic Physician at The Prince Charles Hospital, Brisbane and Visiting Medical Officer at St Vincent’s Private Hospital Northside, Brisbane. His research, at the University of Queensland Thoracic Research Centre, aims to reduce the burden of disease caused by lung cancer by focusing on lung cancer early detection, screening, and smoking cessation.

Dr Moya Vandeleur is a Paediatric Respiratory and Sleep Medicine Specialist at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, and the department research lead. Her clinical work involves children with general respiratory and sleep problems. Moya is the deputy convenor for the TSANZ Tobacco & Related Substances SIG and has a special interest in adolescent health and the health effects of vaping.