Will liberalising access to e-cigarettes improve the health of Australians?

**Current Smoking Rates**

- **14%** of Australian adults currently smoke.
- **15%** of New Zealand adults currently smoke.

**Have ever used an e-cigarette?**

- **8.8%** of Australian adults

**Patterns of use vary by tobacco smoking status, with daily vaping prevalence of 1.5%, 0.8% and 0.2% among current, ex and never smokers, respectively.**

**What is an e-cigarette?**

E-cigarettes deliver **nicotine** to the body from a **vaporised solution** and are **less harmful** to health than smoking.

**Are they legal?**

The regulation of vaping products varies around the globe, with the UK and the US having relatively liberal regimes, while Australia, Thailand and Singapore have various types of bans.

Regardless of legal status, people are circumventing any bans by **buying on the internet**.

**Legalising access to e-cigarettes could lead to:**

- An estimated **236,000** quality adjusted life years (QALYs) gained by the New Zealand population alive in 2011.

**This health gain is equivalent to:**

- **19 days of healthy life** per person alive over the remainder of their lives
- **The health gain from 10% per annum over 15 years** tax increases on tobacco
- A health system saving of about **$815 per person** alive over the remainder of their lives (AUD $2016)*

**How certain are these findings?**

There is still much uncertainty about future health impacts of long-term use of e-cigarettes.*

The two biggest drivers of uncertainty were:

- The relative health harm of e-cigarettes compared to tobacco smoking
- The impact of liberalizing access to e-cigarettes on overall smoking cessation rates

*The authors explicitly modelled all major sources of uncertainty, estimating a 95% range of QALY gains in NZ of 27,000 to 457,000 – a wide range, but excluding a scenario of health loss.

**What’s next?**

Further research is needed on the **impact of vaping on quitting smoking**, on the **relative harm to health of vaping** and on the **impact of e-cigarettes on youth smoking rates**, given they drive the uncertainty in estimating future health impacts.

Stronger tobacco control policies that denormalise smoking and reduce supply will positively enhance the impact of greater access to e-cigarettes.

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4. Equivalent to $300 per person at 3% annual discount rate

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