

SECOND READING SPEECH

Public Health Amendment (Vaping) Bill 2024

Honourable Speaker

I am proud to introduce the Public Health Amendment (Vaping) Bill 2024.

This Bill delivers important and strong actions to significantly reduce the use and uptake of e-cigarettes, which has increased rapidly in recent years, especially by young Tasmanians.

E-cigarettes, also known as vapes, work by heating a cartridge that contains liquid. The heating process creates an aerosol that resembles tobacco smoke.

E-cigarettes contain harmful chemicals and toxins. Immediate harms of e-cigarette use can include throat irritation and cough, dizziness, headaches and nausea. Using e-cigarettes with nicotine can lead to nicotine dependence. E-cigarettes can also explode causing serious burns.

Currently, e-cigarettes can only be supplied by pharmacies to people 18 years or over with a prescription.

From 1 October, across the rest of Australia, this will change as therapeutic e-cigarette products containing a nicotine concentration of less than 20 milligrams or zero-nicotine will become available for supply over the counter in pharmacy settings.

This will be for people 18 years or over without a prescription, subject to certain conditions.

What will happen in Tasmania will be a different, more stringent approach.

Tasmania will retain the current requirement for e-cigarettes to be supplied by a pharmacist with a prescription.

And the supply of e-cigarettes for a person under 18 years of age will continue to be banned.

The prescription only approach will be achieved by amendments to the *Public Health Act 1997* to establish a separate smoking product licence for pharmacy businesses with conditions that include to require a doctor's prescription when dispensing vaping products.

Under this reform, pharmacists will continue to have to apply for a smoking product licence but will not be required to pay an application fee.

An amendment will also be made to clarify that e-cigarette products supplied by a pharmacy with a doctor's prescription are not an exempt device when used in an area designated smoke free or vape free.

This is to ensure Tasmanians continue to be protected from potential harms from exposure to second hand vapour and is in keeping with the longstanding approach to not normalise vaping behaviour in shared public places.

These actions are part of national reforms agreed to by all state and territory Health Ministers and the Federal Minister for Health in May 2023 to significantly reduce the use and uptake of e-cigarettes in Australia.

Tasmania continues to support the implementation of the national vaping reforms, however, is going one step further by ensuring the medical oversight that comes with a doctor's prescription for the supply of e-cigarettes continues after 1 October 2024.

This is a strong preventive health measure. It complements our existing and ongoing initiatives to help people who use tobacco or e-cigarettes to quit, whilst continuing to encourage young people to remain smoke free and vape free.

Whilst I am pleased to bring this Bill before the House for the purpose of requiring prescription access to e-cigarette products, I note and emphasise that e-cigarettes are not 'first line' treatments for smoking cessation.

Along with support from a health practitioner and services such as the Tasmanian Quitline, there are many nicotine replacement products available to manage nicotine dependence and to help quit smoking that are known to be safe and effective.

We have made good progress in recent years to reduce smoking rates and tobacco related harm in Tasmania.

Sustained action and the involvement of all of us – government, business, communities, health professionals, and individuals – is needed to ensure this progress continues.

I acknowledge the support of this Bill by key stakeholders including the Cancer Council Tasmania and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and look forward to working together to improve and protect the health of Tasmanians into the future.

I commend the Bill to the House.