



Committee recommends a nicotine licensing scheme

Victoria should establish a nicotine licensing scheme and active regulatory authority to better manage vaping and tobacco products, a report tabled in Parliament today has recommended.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee has been evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to prevent and reduce the harm of tobacco use and vaping.

“Victoria is the only Australian jurisdiction that does not have a tobacco licensing scheme,” said Committee Chair Sarah Connolly.

“We think there needs to be a well-resourced, independent state agency within the Department of Justice and Community Safety to lead enforcement,” she said.

The Committee has endorsed Better Regulation Victoria’s proposal for a well-resourced, standalone regulatory agency with compliance and enforcement powers, and for significantly increased fines and penalties including jail time, to target the illicit tobacco trade.

“Given the high profitability of the illicit trade, penalties which outweigh profits are essential,” she said.

Tobacco smoking is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Victoria, and a key driver of social inequalities in health. Every year smoking costs the Victorian community 4,000 lives and \$5 billion.

The Committee found that tobacco use has declined in Victoria over the last 20 years. However there has been a rapid growth in vaping since 2018, particularly by young people including children.

“Nicotine addiction among children is becoming a serious health and behavioural issue for schools and many lack the resources for effective diversion and cessation management. School resources should be examined to ensure they are fit for purpose,” she said.

The Committee found that community awareness of the environmental impacts of e-cigarette products is limited and recommended developing awareness campaigns on the environmental harm posed by disposable e-cigarettes.

The report makes 27 recommendations that build on the experience of local stakeholders and other jurisdictions

The Committee received 115 submissions and heard from a wide range of experts in public health, policing, education and public administration in three days of hearings in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The report is available to read on the Committee's [website](#).

The government has six months to respond to the report.

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