

# Liquid nicotine. Prescription or consumer product?



**NO western country requires vapers to have a prescription for nicotine liquid. This document summarises the reasons why nicotine liquid should be a consumer product, not a prescription medicine.**

Low concentrations of nicotine liquid are not medicines. They are a safer consumer product used to replace an existing consumer product, lethal cigarettes. Consumer products are regulated by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission which can provide strong protection to the public under consumer law.

It should be easier to access vaping products than deadly cigarettes. It makes no sense for people to go to a doctor and a pharmacist to get nicotine liquid, when cigarettes are easily accessible. A [large consumer survey](#) has confirmed that this may lead many vapers back to smoking or to the blackmarket for illicit supplies.

Subjecting every nicotine vaping liquid to a rigorous medicines-quality assessment when cigarettes are largely unregulated is irrational. Low concentrations of nicotine liquid in child-resistant containers are low-risk products which cause minimal harm and are lifesaving for many smokers.

## A prescription model won't work

- **Vapers won't do it.** The current laws require vapers to have a prescription to import nicotine liquid. ATHRA estimates that no more than 1-2% of vapers currently have a prescription.
- **Doctors won't do it.** There are less than a dozen GPs in Australia who are willing write nicotine prescriptions and 520,000 vapers. Very few doctors understand vaping or know how to write a nicotine prescription.
- **Pharmacists won't do it.** Pharmacists are not trained in vaping and cannot give advice to new users. The [Pharmacy Guild](#) has stated that it will not dispense liquid nicotine as a prescription product.
- **Manufacturers won't do it.** Most products are made by small to medium businesses which do not have the expertise, experience or budget to conduct clinical trials and go through the costly and onerous regulatory process for every single product. The tobacco industry with its unlimited resources will take over the market.

## Other harmful effects

- Providing prescriptions will add huge costs to Medicare. If 25% of vapers get an annual prescription, the cost to Medicare will be \$14.6 million each year. If all current vapers comply, it will cost \$60 million each year.
- The black market will thrive. Illegal suppliers will fill the gap with unregulated and unsafe products, happily sold to young people.
- Vape shops will be decimated. Vape shop staff have the experience and knowledge to help smokers make the transition to vaping. Vape shops survive on the sale of vaping liquids.
- Costs to vapers will increase due to the cost of regulatory compliance, doctors' fees and pharmacy markup.
- Product choices and flavours will be drastically restricted.

