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MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE

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NEXT STEPS ON VAPING REFORMS

The first stage of Australia's new vaping reforms are set to commence on 1 January, with further protections implemented and strengthened over the course of 2024.

These reforms will protect Australians, particularly young people, from the harms of vaping and nicotine dependence. All Australian Health Ministers have agreed to implement a nationally consistent and concerted response to vaping.

From 1 January 2024, the Government will implement a ban on the importation of disposable single use vapes. This is subject to legislative and administrative arrangements being approved, including by the Governor-General in Federal Executive Council.

In parallel with this ban, a new Special Access Scheme pathway to prescribe vapes will commence on 1 January 2024, which will facilitate improved access to therapeutic vapes, whereby all medical practitioners and nurse practitioners will be able to prescribe their use where clinically appropriate.

From 1 March 2024, further changes are expected to commence, including the:

- cessation of the personal importation of vapes
- ban on the importation of non-therapeutic vapes
- requirement for therapeutic vape importers and manufacturers to notify the Therapeutic Goods Administration of their product's compliance with the relevant product standards
- requirement for importers to obtain a licence and permit from the Australian Government's Office of Drug Control before the products are imported.

During 2024, product standards for therapeutic vapes will also be strengthened, including to limit flavours, reduce permissible nicotine concentrations and require pharmaceutical packaging. A transition period will be allowed for businesses to comply with the new requirements.

The Government will introduce legislation in 2024 to prevent domestic manufacture, advertisement, supply and commercial possession of non-therapeutic and disposable single use vapes to ensure comprehensive controls on vapes across all levels of the supply chain.

The vaping reforms were the focus of a joint meeting of all Australian Health and Police Ministers last week. At this important meeting, Ministers agreed to task officials with developing a national enforcement framework for vaping products – to stamp out unlawful vapes in the community and prevent illegal markets from emerging. It was agreed that a multi-agency National Vaping Working Group will be established to oversee development and implementation of the national enforcement framework.

This strong, comprehensive action, complemented by enhanced compliance and enforcement activity across all governments, will turn the tide against the rising use of vapes by young Australians.

We know that vapes pose a range of known and unknown risks to Australians, particularly among young people.

The latest data, from the first quarter of 2023, shows that about one in seven 14- to 17-year-olds and one in five 18- to 24-year-olds are current vapers.

There is strong and consistent evidence that young Australians who vape are around 3 times more likely to take up tobacco smoking compared to young Australians who have never vaped.

To introduce and enforce these reforms, the Government will provide an additional \$25 million to Australian Border Force and \$56.9 million to the Therapeutic Goods

Administration over two years.

Alongside these measures, the Government is expanding and strengthening vaping and smoking cessation support services. The 2023-24 Budget provided \$29.5 million in funding to help Australians quit. This includes funding to support improved access to Quitline services and creation of an online cessation hub, updated clinical guidance for health practitioners and the redevelopment of the My Quit Buddy app.

Quotes attributable to Minister Butler:

“Vaping is creating a whole new generation of nicotine dependency in our community. It poses a major threat to Australia’s success in tobacco control and the Albanese Government is not going to stand by and let this happen.

“Vaping was sold to governments and communities around the world as a therapeutic product to help long-term smokers quit. It was not sold as a recreational product - especially not one targeted to our kids but that is what it has become.

“All Australian governments are committed to working together to stop the disturbing growth in vaping among our young people.

“We’re taking tough action because this is a major public health issue.

“The great majority of vapes contain nicotine and children are becoming addicted. Vaping is a gateway to smoking and smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Smoking continues to kill approximately 20,000 Australians every year.

“The government is alive to the implementation obstacles, like all other illegal drugs, there will no doubt be some vapes that get into the country but they will no longer be easy for school children, our most vulnerable and impressionable members of society, to get their hands on them.”

Quotes attributable to Minister O’Neil:

“This measure will enable the ABF to take targeted action to stem the flow of vapes at the border.

“As our first line of defence, the ABF will detect, seize and destroy vape products under a new border control measure.

“What we do at the border will make a difference but reducing the amount of vapes in the community requires a multi-faceted approach across all levels of government, involving both enforcement and better education around the harmful impact of vaping.”

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