

Media Release

## CALLING ALL AUSTRALIANS TO STICK TO SCIENCE ON E-CIGARETTES

20 December 2018 -- Minderoo Foundation's Eliminate Cancer Initiative (ECI) urges Australians to stick to the science on e-cigarette use.

In the wake of the first Australian campaign to encourage smokers to switch to e-cigarettes, ECI advises Australians considering the product to first seek advice from one of Australia's leading, independent health bodies.

E-cigarettes are a non-approved smoking product that heats a liquid that may or may not contain nicotine. Cautionary guidance on e-cigarette use has been issued by all of Australia's leading health bodies, such as the Cancer Council and Australian Medical Association, as well as the CSIRO, the National Health and Medical Research Council, and the World Health Organisation.

This cautionary guidance stems from growing evidence that e-cigarette use is a precursor to cigarette smoking initiation in young people, the health harms linked to e-cigarettes include increased risk of respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and carcinogenesis, and there remains a lack of conclusive evidence that e-cigarettes are effective as an aid to quitting smoking.<sup>i,ii</sup>

E-cigarettes containing nicotine are not available for sale in Australia. These products can be imported, but only with a doctor's prescription. In recent times, lobby groups have become increasingly vocal about their desire to make e-cigarettes as widely accessible as cigarettes. These lobbyists regularly rely on a single figure published almost three years ago,<sup>iii</sup> to support their claims that e-cigarettes are safe. This figure has been widely contested.<sup>iv</sup>

Eliminate Cancer Initiative Chief Operating Officer, Bruce Mansfield, urged the Australian public to seek information on e-cigarettes from credible leading health organisations before considering their use.

"The ultimate aim of many of these campaigners is to see e-cigarettes approved for commercial sale in Australia," Mr Mansfield said. "This approach has been allowed in a number of markets overseas and has resulted in e-cigarettes being taken up by teenagers in epidemic proportions.

"There was a 900 per cent increase in the uptake of e-cigarette use among young people in the US between 2011 and 2015,<sup>v</sup> and an alarming increase in e-cigarette use was reported just last month by the US Food and Drug Association, which described e-cigarette use in America as 'an epidemic'.<sup>vi</sup>

"If we are serious about saving lives by reducing smoking rates in Australia, we need to think very seriously about e-cigarettes and the pathway they provide to smoking addiction," Mr Mansfield continued.

"As long as people have a vulnerable dependence on any form of smoking product or nicotine, we will struggle to reduce smoking rates. The tobacco and vaping industries know this, and they are making billions out of it... we can't allow young Australians to be fooled by their marketing gimmicks.

"The best thing we can do for our children and grandchildren is educate them on the severe health harms of smoking, and make sure they do not become addicted to nicotine and ultimately hooked on an arbitrary habit that has a two-in-three chance of killing them."

ECI is also calling on all State and Territory Governments to embrace further preventive measures to send a clear message to industry that the Government is committed to stopping people smoking.

ECI would like to commend the Australian Government and Federal and State Ministers for Health on the consistent and firm stance taken on unapproved smoking products like e-cigarettes.

“The current regulations in Australia protect our most vulnerable citizens from e-cigarettes,” Mr Mansfield said. “But global evidence has demonstrated the commercial retail availability and sale of these products presents more challenges for our public health system. It is critical that Australians know the facts and understand the health implications of non-approved smoking products, such as e-cigarettes.”

- ENDS -

Eliminate Cancer Initiative position statement on e-cigarettes:

<https://www.stopsmokingbeforeitstarts.org.au/media/ECI-e-cigarette-Position-Statement.pdf>

Bruce Mansfield is available for interview.

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<sup>i</sup> Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, *E-cigarettes, smoking and health*, August 2018. Accessed From: <https://www.csiro.au/en/Research/BF/Areas/Nutrition-and-health/E-cigarettes-report>,

<sup>ii</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council. NHMRC CEO Statement: Electronic Cigarettes (E-cigarettes). Accessed from: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/ceo-statement-electronic-cigarettes>.

<sup>iii</sup> Royal College of Physicians UK, ‘Nicotine without smoke: Tobacco harm reduction’, Tobacco Advisory Group of the Royal College of Physicians UK. Published: 28 April 2016, accessed from:

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/nicotine-without-smoke-tobacco-harm-reduction-0>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://theconversation.com/twelve-myths-about-e-cigarettes-that-failed-to-impress-the-tga-72408>

<sup>v</sup> Wang TW, Gentzke A, Sharapova S, et al. Tobacco Use Among Middle and High School Student – United States, 2011-2017. *MMWR Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*. 2018;67(22):629-663. (Cited in: *Surgeon General’s Advisory on E-cigarette Use Among Youth*).

<sup>vi</sup> FDA Statement November 15, 2018, ‘Statement from FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D., on proposed new steps to protect youth by preventing access to flavored tobacco products and banning menthol in cigarettes’, *U.S. Food & Drug Administration*, accessed from: <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm625884.htm>