

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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AMA joins school sector in standing up for the health of Australian children

The Australian Medical Association has joined 11 of the country's leading education and school parent groups to call on legislators to pass the federal government's vaping reforms.

Vaping is threatening the health and development of Australian children, prompting school principals, teachers and parents to make an impassioned plea for action.

In a joint letter to all Senators and MPs, the groups warn of the growing crisis of vaping in Australian schoolyards, where teachers, principals and parents are facing a difficult battle to protect the health and wellbeing of children.

"Vaping is becoming normalised in Australian schools and big tobacco and the vaping lobby will do anything and say anything to keep these products on retail shelves — at the expense of children's health," AMA President Professor Steve Robson said.

"Vapes are filled with highly addictive nicotine and laced with chemicals that are known to be dangerous to human health, including formaldehyde, mercury and arsenic.

"The human brain does not stop developing until the mid-twenties and nicotine is proven to have negative impacts on cognition, reasoning and attention — not to mention the significant disruption vaping has to school learning environments."

The federal government's next stage of vaping reforms will ban the importation, manufacture, supply, commercial possession and advertisement of disposable single-use and non-therapeutic vapes.

These restrictions will prevent widespread access to vapes and effectively remove them from school environments, while upholding the role of GPs in providing evidence-based care for people dealing with nicotine addiction.

The legislation has passed the House of Representatives, and it is now up to Senators to stand up for the wellbeing of young Australians.

Quotes attributable to Correna Haythorpe, President, Australian Education Union

"Vaping is a significant issue facing Australian schools, and our members have highlighted its disruptive impact for students and for teaching and learning.

"The management of situations where student vaping is occurring should not be an additional burden carried by teachers who are already experiencing unsustainable workloads and managing more complex classrooms. We need a systemic response to vaping that is supported by governments and education departments.

"Student health and wellbeing is paramount to student engagement and learning, and is our key priority. We support the government's proposed reforms and call for urgent action to protect our students, and to support the teaching profession."

Quotes attributable to Damien Ellwood, President, Australian Council of State School Organisations

"We are deeply concerned about the normalisation of vaping among youth.

"Urgent action is needed for a public health and education campaign, especially to equip families and carers with information.

"We need stricter regulations to reduce the supply of vapes, safeguarding our children's health and well-being. ACSSO asks all senators to support the government's proposed reforms."



Quotes attributable to Andrea Obeyesekere, Chair, Catholic School Parents Australia

"Protecting our children from the dangers of vaping is crucial for their health and well-being.

"This legislation is a necessary step towards ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment, free from the harmful impacts of vaping.

"Families rely on schools to be safe havens where their children's health is prioritised, allowing them to thrive academically and personally.

"The proposed measures will help maintain this environment, reinforcing our commitment to fostering the holistic development of every student."

Quotes attributable to Jenny Branch-Allen, President, Australian Parents Council

"Vaping is causing harm to our young people and strong measures need to be taken to protect our children.

"Australian adults all need to lead by example and protect our children from harm and death caused by vaping.

"Surely saving one child's life is worth the change."

Letter signatories

Australian Medical Association

Australian Education Union

Australian Council of State School Organisations

Australian Parents Council

Catholic School Parents Australia

Catholic Secondary Principals Association

Australian Secondary Principals Association

Australian Primary Principals Association

National Catholic Education Commission

Australian Special Education Principals Association

Anglican Schools Commission

Independent Schools Australia

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