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AMA BACKS STRONG RESPONSE TO E-CIGARETTE DEATHS

The AMA strongly supports the response from all Australian governments to emerging international evidence of a possible link between the use of e-cigarettes and lung disease.

In a joint statement, Australia’s Chief Medical Officer and all the State and Territory Chief Health Officers have urged a precautionary approach to the marketing and use of e-cigarettes and recommended that e-cigarette users with unexplained respiratory symptoms seek medical advice.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the warnings are timely, with reports of a seventh death in the United States linked to vaping-related lung disease.

“The AMA has advocated for a precautionary approach to e-cigarettes for some time,” Dr Bartone said.

“Along with other prominent health groups, including the Thoracic Society of Australia, the AMA was a signatory to the 2018 Cancer Australia Statement that highlighted concerns about e-cigarettes.

“We have also raised concerns about the promotion of e-cigarettes as smoking cessation aids. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) believes there is insufficient evidence that e-cigarettes have a role as cessation aids.

“Under the direction of the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, the National Centre for Epidemiology and Public Health is currently conducting an Australian review of the evidence around e-cigarettes.

“There is evidence that e-cigarettes normalise smoking, particularly among young people.

“International experience shows that e-cigarettes are popular among young people, increasing the risk of nicotine addiction and subsequent tobacco smoking.

“Preventing exposure to smoking among young people is a key pillar of tobacco control efforts. Young people need to be educated and assisted to resist the clever advertising and marketing for e-cigarettes – it is just a smokescreen.

“We must continue to be a world leader in combating smoking and being vigilant about products and promotions, including e-cigarettes, that may tempt people to continue or take up the killer habit.

“The current experience of vaping-related deaths in in the United States reinforces the importance of a precautionary approach where there is a potential for doing harm,” Dr Bartone said.

The Statement from the Chief Medical Officer and the State and Territory Chief Health Officers is available at https://canceraustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/statement_on_e-cigarettes_in_australia.pdf

The AMA Position Statement on Tobacco and E-Cigarettes is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/tobacco-smoking-and-e-cigarettes-2015>

The AMA submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Vaporised Nicotine Products Bill 2017 is available at <https://ama.com.au/submission/ama-submission-senate-community-affairs-legislation-committee-inquiry-vaporised-nicotine>

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