

Smokefree Environments & Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2)

September 2024



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

Tirohanga Whānui | Overview

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Smokefree Environments & Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2). We support the kaupapa to strengthen the regulatory framework around vaping and prevent young people's access to vaping products. We advocate for restrictions that make vaping less accessible and less attractive to young people.

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

Our main points are:

1. Young people have increased likelihood of addiction to vapes

Teens are already more susceptible to addiction than adults because their brains are still developing, which makes them more likely to habituate to using drugs and alcohol. Young people's brains are very 'neuroplastic' meaning that the structure can change to adapt to environmental factors. Nicotine can affect brain function and triggers the reward system in your brain, increasing the chance of addiction. This means that through repeated exposures, the brain learns that certain cues, such as vape logos and even the shape of a vape device, are associated with nicotine. Exposure to nicotine can rewire your brain to be more addicted to nicotine and other substances into adulthood (Miller, 2024; Versace, 2024).

Recommendation 1: We suggest that this Bill advance to protect children and young people from the negative effects that exposure to vapes and nicotine has on brain development.

2. Vapes contain chemicals that cause cancer

There is evidence that there are chemicals used in vapes that are extremely dangerous such as propylene glycol and formaldehyde. Formaldehyde is found in products like floor cleaners, this chemical can permanently damage your lungs and cause cancer. Propylene glycol is a synthetic liquid that can trigger asthma. Vapes also contain heavy metals like arsenic and nickel which can cause cancer and other diseases (Queensland Government, 2024).

Recommendation 2: We suggest that this Bill advance to protect children and young people from the cancer-causing chemicals found in vapes.

3. Vaping can negatively impact mental health

Nicotine affects your brain development. This can make it harder to learn and concentrate. Some of the brain changes are permanent and can affect your mood and ability to control your impulses as an adult. Vaping can also worsen mental issues such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders, although many people start vaping to relieve stress (Newport Institute, 2024).

Recommendation 3: We suggest that this Bill advance to protect children and young people's mental health.

4. Current restrictions relating to vape retailers do not apply to pre-existing retailers or general retailers like dairies:

The current restrictions are not effective enough because vape stores that were already existing close to schools were not affected by the restrictions introduced in the Smokefree Environments

and Regulated Products Act 1990. Also, the restrictions do not apply to general vape retailers like dairies. Many schools already had vapes sold in close proximity when the restrictions were introduced. One example is Highlands Intermediate School, that has a dairy selling vapes within 100 metres of the front gate. Our school has around 640 kids that have a vape store a 40 second walk away. The fact that the restrictions only stop new vape stores from being opened, and don't apply to stores like dairies, limits how effective the restrictions are for young people.

Recommendation 4: We suggest that the restrictions be extended to cover any vape retailer.

5. The current restriction area for vape retailers is too small

The current restrictions which prevent vape retailers opening within 300 metres of school's listed address is far too small. Some kids walk around 2-3 kilometres to and from school a day. There are many stores that sell vapes close to schools. The visibility of vape stores for young children or teens makes it easy for young kids to want to begin to vape or start earlier than restrictive age standards.

Recommendation 5: We advocate for the location regulations to be increased to make it harder for vapes to be sold close to schools.

Ko wai tātou | Who we are

NZCCSS has six foundation members; the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support and the Methodist and Salvation Army Churches.

Through this membership, NZCCSS represents over 230 organisations providing a range of social support services across Aotearoa. We believe in working to achieve a just and compassionate society for all, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Further details on NZCCSS can be found on our website www.nzccss.org.nz.

Ingoa whakapā | Contact Name

Nikki Hurst

References

Miller, C. (2024) *Mental health disorders and teen substance use*. Child Mind Institute.

<https://childmind.org/article/mental-health-disorders-and-substance-use/#:~:text=In%20the%20adolescent%20brain%2C%20pathways,at%2015%2C%E2%80%9D%20adds%20Ms>

Newport Institute. (2022). *How vaping affects mental health*.

<https://www.newportinstitute.com/resources/co-occurring-disorders/vaping-and-mental-health/#:~:text=Key%20Takeaways,numerous%20negative%20physical%20health%20effects.>

Queensland Government. (2024). *Vaping exposed*. <https://vapingexposed.initiatives.qld.gov.au/>

Versace, F. (2024). *Vaping and your brain: What to know*. The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. <https://www.mdanderson.org/publications/focused-on-health/is-vaping-safe-.h19-1592202.html>