

**Submission  
No 33**

## **E-CIGARETTE REGULATION AND COMPLIANCE IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Lebanese Muslim Association

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**Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety**  
**Parliament of New South Wales**  
**Sydney, NSW, 2200**

**Subject: Inquiry into E-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales**

Dear Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Lebanese Muslim Association in Lakemba, Sydney, we are writing to provide our submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into e-cigarette regulation and compliance in New South Wales, which was self-referred on 6 September 2023. We are committed to contributing to this important inquiry, focusing on the specific areas outlined in the terms of reference and their impact on the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community we service.

(a) The Current Situation in NSW Regarding E-Cigarettes

*i. The Prevalence of E-Cigarette Use Among Children and Young People:*

A survey conducted in NSW in 2021 of teenagers aged 14–17 found that about one-third of the sample (32%) had ever vaped, 16% had vaped in the past month (49% of ever-vapers), and 5% reported vaping between 10 and 30 days of the last 30 (15% of ever-vapers) (Watts et al., 2022).

The prevalence of e-cigarette use among children and young people in CALD communities is a pressing concern due to a lack of available statistics. We recommend conducting culturally sensitive studies and surveys to understand the prevalence and factors driving e-cigarette use within these communities. Community members have reported witnessing children and young people using and/or holding vapes at local train stations, shopping centres, and at schools. Use of vapes is widely observable in public in South-West Sydney by people from a wide range of ages.

*ii. Health Risks Associated with E-Cigarette Products:*

Vaping can place young individuals at risk, as it can expose them to various dangers, including the presence of harmful substances reminiscent of those in cleaning products, nail polish remover, weed killer, and bug spray (NSW Health, 2023). Additionally, it can lead to exposure to toxins like formaldehyde and heavy metals, as well as the inhalation of ultrafine particles that can penetrate deep into the lungs.

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Moreover, vaping entails the consumption of flavoring chemicals, such as diacetyl, which has been linked to serious lung diseases. We urge the committee to commission research on the long-term health implications of e-cigarette use due to the high prevalence use and the serious short-medium term health risks associated with vaping.

*iii. The Impact of Programs and Services Aimed at Preventing Uptake or Continuing Use of E-Cigarettes:*

Both programs and services have not been systematically rolled out on a large scale as we would have hoped. We wish to highlight the lack of services aimed at e-cigarette cessation. Programs have also been slow to roll out. We advocate for a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of existing programs and services within CALD communities, tailored to prevent e-cigarette use and support those seeking to quit. Culturally appropriate educational campaigns and accessible support systems are essential.

(b) NSW's Current Regulatory Framework

*i. Effectiveness in Reducing Harm from E-Cigarette Use:*

Stricter controls and packaging requirements should be considered due to e-cigarettes wide availability, lack of regulation, and attractive packaging available.

*ii. Effectiveness in Preventing Illegal Supply:*

Regulatory measures should be evaluated for their effectiveness in preventing illegal supply. Licensing and distribution practices should be examined. There are widespread anecdotal reports of illegal supply of e-cigarettes being prevalent in the community in South-West Sydney, where purchasing an e-cigarette is easily available.

Most teens (70%) didn't directly buy the last vape they used (Watts et al., 2022). The vast majority (80%) of these got it from their friends. However, for the 30% who did buy their own vape, close to half (49%) bought it from a friend or another individual, and 31% bought it from a retailer such as a petrol station, tobacconist or convenience store. Teens also said they bought vapes through social media, at vape stores and via websites.

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*iii. Challenges to enforcement and compliance and ways to overcome these:*

Challenges related to enforcement and compliance within CALD communities should be addressed. A main challenge will be that community members are unaware of laws related to vaping, and for those who are aware, they have been conditioned to very minimal regulation and follow-up.

It is also recommended to improve cultural competency within regulatory agencies and to foster collaboration with local law enforcement agencies that understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of residents. Laws should be made clear and be visible to ensure community members and young people are aware of them.

(c) Collaboration with the Federal Government

We strongly recommend close collaboration with the Federal Government to create a unified and culturally sensitive approach to e-cigarette regulation. This includes standardising regulations, sharing research findings, and engaging in public health initiatives that are also inclusive and responsive to the needs of the different communities across Australia.

(d) Any Other Related Matter

In addition to the areas outlined in the terms of reference, we emphasize the importance of ensuring product labelling and advertising practices are culturally appropriate and clear to the diverse CALD community. Misleading practices should be addressed to protect the interests and health of our community members.

In conclusion, the Lebanese Muslim Association in Lakemba, NSW, is committed to supporting initiatives that promote the well-being and health of CALD communities in the face of e-cigarette use. We urge the committee to consider the recommendations presented in this submission and work towards inclusive, culturally sensitive, and effective e-cigarette regulation in New South Wales.

We are available to provide further information. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further discussions.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and we look forward to the outcomes of the parliamentary inquiry.

Sincerely,

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## References

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