



## Media Release

### 117 WA vape sellers shut-up-shop, but convenience stores still break the rules

New research published today shows that dedicated vape retail stores in WA have become extinct since new national federal vaping legislation was introduced last year. But with researchers identifying that many convenience stores continue to break the rules, experts say ongoing monitoring and stricter enforcement is needed.

The study, led by The University of Notre Dame Australia, has been published today in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. It follows the introduction of national vaping legislation in 2024 that restricted the sale of vapes to pharmacies, making it illegal to sell or advertise vapes in other retail shops.

The researchers found that there were 194 “bricks and mortar” shops where vape products were a key product category in WA in January 2023, prior to Government action. By September 2024, three months after federal vaping legislation took effect:

- All dedicated vape stores and vape counters within other stores had closed (117),
- 76 stores that had previously sold vapes alongside other products showed no evidence of vape sales, and
- Only one vape store was openly observed to still be selling vapes on the day of in-person audit.

Co-author Professor Lisa Wood from The University of Notre Dame says that the findings are a positive indication that the Federal Government’s national vaping reforms are helping to protect young people’s health.

“This study quantifies the rise and fall of vape stores in Western Australia. Previously, these stores were all-too common in our local communities. They were often located near schools and openly advertised vape products to passers-by, with enticing windows displays and appealing flavours contributing to the normalisation of vaping amongst young people.

“Encouragingly, since the national legislation was introduced, all 117 dedicated vape stores we have been monitoring in WA have closed, and specialist vape retailers are no longer open for business on our streets. A further 76 shops which previously sold vapes have moved on from vape sales and no longer appear to be selling them.”

Concerningly though, researchers discovered that many inner-Perth convenience stores were still illegally selling vape products under-the-counter three months after the new laws were enacted.

Co-author Angela Gazey from The University of Notre Dame, says “In June 2024, almost one in two of the 32 inner Perth convenience stores we visited in-person were selling vapes. Eleven of these stores were still doing so three months later, after the new national legislation took hold.

“Anecdotally we have also heard about convenience stores elsewhere in Australia selling vapes – it is an anathema to associate “convenience” with a product that is illegal to sell and harmful to health”

Adjunct Prof Terry Slevin, CEO, Public Health Association of Australia, says the study shows the real-world impact of Australia’s world-leading vaping legislation.

“The Australian Government took a stand against vapes last year introducing world-leading legislation.

“Australia’s approach was backed up by evidence, but unique. This study shows us one of the early results, vape shops shutting shop and no longer being able to blatantly flog their products on street

fronts. This is a positive step forward and follows other research that indicates that Australian teenage vape use has declined.

“The finding that convenience stores are continuing to sell vapes illegally is not surprising. This sector has a long history of undermining community health efforts, putting profits first. Illegal convenience store vape sales are happening across the country. That’s why public health experts continue to welcome retail monitoring, strict enforcement, border inspections, and tough penalties for those who break the rules.

“Let’s be clear. Vapes are dangerous. Their ingredients should not be inhaled into young lungs. They should not serve as a means of addicting kids to nicotine or tobacco. This is about preventing an epidemic of lung and other disease in the future. The time to act is now. And the action and penalties rightly focus on those making the profits.”

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*“Changes in the retail availability of vapes through brick and mortar vape stores and convenience stores in Western Australia following legislative reform”* will be published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* at 12:01am 3 September AEST.

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