

Submission to the New Zealand Government on the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2)

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand (PSNZ) | Te Kāhui Mātai Arotamariki o Aotearoa (PSNZ) is a professional body of over 600 health professionals dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa. As part of our mission to protect the health of young New Zealanders, we strongly support the proposed Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2), which seeks to address the growing concern around youth vaping and reduce access to harmful tobacco and vaping products. According to the [2023 ASH Year 10 Snapshot Survey](#), 10% of Year 10 students vape daily, with a particularly concerning rate of 22.3% among Māori students vaping daily.

General Position

PSNZ supports the intent of this Bill to strengthen restrictions on tobacco and vaping products, particularly with regard to:

- Banning disposable vapes, which are highly attractive to young people and contribute significantly to youth nicotine addiction.
- Increasing penalties for selling regulated vaping products to minors, reinforcing the seriousness of this issue.
- Reducing the visibility of vaping products, especially in areas frequented by young people, such as near schools and early childhood centres.

We view these measures as vital steps towards reducing youth vaping rates and safeguarding the future health of young New Zealanders.

The need for stronger regulations on vaping

Vaping, initially promoted as a smoking cessation tool, has escalated into a significant issue for youth in Aotearoa. This is especially concerning given that many of these young people, including those who have never smoked, are developing nicotine addictions. This poses both immediate and long-term health risks, further highlighting the urgent need for stricter regulations to protect youth from nicotine dependency.

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PSNZ clinicians are witnessing the impact of vaping on young people firsthand. Young people are presenting with symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, and this addiction is affecting their education, health, and social wellbeing.

Specific support for key provisions in the Bill

- **Ban on Disposable Vapes**
We fully support the prohibition on disposable vapes. These products are inexpensive, easy to access, and designed to be appealing to young people. Their low cost and accessibility have made them a gateway for youth to experiment with and become addicted to nicotine.
- **Increased Penalties for Sales to Minors**
We fully support the Bill's increased penalties for selling vaping and tobacco products to minors. This crucial measure will act as a strong deterrent for retailers, helping to prevent these harmful products from reaching young hands. Stricter penalties are vital to reinforce the legal responsibility of retailers and emphasise the seriousness of contributing to youth nicotine addiction.
- **Enhancing Proximity and Visibility Restrictions**
We strongly support the Bill's provisions that introduce visibility and proximity restrictions, particularly the regulation prohibiting vape retailers from operating within **300 meters** of early childhood education centres, schools, and marae. These measures significantly reduce the visibility and accessibility of vaping products near young populations, helping to diminish their normalisation and perceived acceptability among youth.

Addressing the need for a youth-focused vaping strategy

While this Bill takes important steps in reducing access to vaping products, we also advocate for a broader, youth-focused nicotine reduction strategy. PSNZ recommends the development of a comprehensive youth strategy aimed at reducing nicotine addiction among tamariki and rangatahi, encompassing both smoked tobacco and vaping products. This should include:

- Clinical services that provide support for young people who wish to reduce or quit vaping
- Targeted education campaigns that raise awareness of the risks associated with vaping.
- Considering price control measures, such as minimum pricing or excise taxes, to further limit youth access to cheap vaping products

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The Paediatric Society of New Zealand stands firmly in support of the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products Amendment Bill (No 2). The Bill aligns with our commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of young people and ensures that Aotearoa continues to lead the world in progressive tobacco control policies.

By implementing these measures, we can create a healthier, nicotine-free future for our tamariki and rangatahi.

Recommendations

- Support the ban on disposable vapes to reduce youth vaping rates.
- Increase penalties for selling regulated products to minors to act as a deterrent.
- Strengthen visibility restrictions and proximity rules to limit access to vaping products near schools and early childhood centres.
- Develop a youth-focused strategy that aims for a nicotine-free generation, incorporating clinical support services and educational campaigns.

This submission has been reviewed and received the endorsement of members and clinical experts from the Paediatric Society of New Zealand, including:

Dr Owen Sinclair, President of PSNZ and Consultant Paediatrician

Dr Colette Muir, Developmental Paediatrician

Ngā mihi,

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*For reliable information on vaping and young people, head to [KidHealth](#).

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