

Te Tiratū Iwi Māori Partnership Board

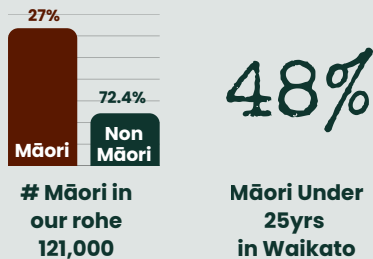
Tauāki Tū *Position Statement*

Vaping



Tuhinga tīmatanga *Introduction*

Te Tiratū is extremely concerned about the widespread uptake of vaping products and the use of predatory marketing strategies used to lure our whānau and to push harmful and addictive products. To uphold our vision *Kia tupu, kia hua, kia puaawai - To grow, prosper and sustain*, we must protect our people, in particular rangatahi, from exploitation by highly addictive vaping products.



There are 121 000 Māori within the Waikato rohe covered by Te Tiratū Iwi Māori Partnership Board. It is a young population as 48% are under 25 years old, significantly rurally based, and present a clear respiratory risk. Te Tiratū monitoring shows an average of 215 Māori children aged 14 and under were hospitalised for asthma each year between 2020 and 2023, at 1.9 times the rate of non-Māori children. This is compounded by high levels of deprivation, damp and mould-affected housing, lower rates of primary care enrolment, and inequitable access to youth cessation support, primary care, and trusted local services.

End exploitation of nicotine addiction

Tobacco was introduced to Māori by Captain Cook. It continues to be aggressively promoted by an industry that profits from the exploitation of nicotine addiction. This includes undermining government policies that are supported by Māori. The industry, and organisations that support it compromise tino rangatiratanga within whānau, hapū, and iwi. Our vaping policy position sits within a wider goal of ending the exploitation of nicotine addiction.

The position recognises:

- Vaping products are designed to be highly addictive, appealing and easy to use, particularly for rangatahi.
- Vaping products are not harmless.
- Vaping poses a particular risk for Rangatahi.
- Vapes may be appealing to people who smoke to either quit their nicotine addiction entirely or switch to less harmful alternative.

Tauāki Tū
Position Statement

Vaping policies that we support

Vapes are only available as a regulated therapy

Vapes should only be available as regulated therapies to support people who smoke to quit nicotine addiction or switch to a less harmful alternative. As part of this we support:

- Only allowing access to vaping products through accredited health related services (e.g. cessation services, pharmacies, primary health practices).
- Regulating the maximum amount of nicotine in vape liquids.
- Requiring vape products come in standardising packaging and design features.
- The range of flavours is limited to only those that are essential.
- Better monitoring and enforcement of illicit nicotine supply (borders, distribution, sale)
- The provision of vaping cessation support services for people who vape (including minors and young people)

Related position statements

- **Tupeka Kore and Nicotine Free:** Ending exploitation of nicotine addiction
 - Smoked tobacco: Banning importation and sales of smoked tobacco products
 - Oral nicotine, Heat-not-burn and other tobacco products: Ban the production and importation of 'recreational' nicotine products
- **Illicit nicotine supply:** Increasing capability to prevent illicit nicotine importation, distribution and sale
- **Cessation support:** Supporting people to stop smoking and quit all forms of nicotine addiction
- **Transparency:** Protecting local, regional and national nicotine policy from industry influence



What are vapes?

Vapes are battery operated devices that heat a liquid, usually containing nicotine, to create an aerosol (made up of fine particles, not a gas).

They were originally designed in the mid 2000's to mimic cigarettes (hence the original name 'e-cigarette') to help people stop smoking¹. Since then they have evolved into a diverse range of 'lifestyle' products ranging from those that are disposable through to devices that can be customised.

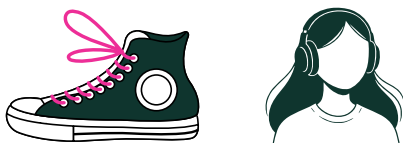
All vapes include a battery, heating element and liquid solution. Refinements in vape design means that they are able to efficiently deliver nicotine to the lungs, in high concentrations, with minimal irritants, and in a range of flavours. They are also designed and packaged to be aesthetically appealing and easily concealable.

While originally developed and promoted through independent manufacturers vapes are also associated with the tobacco industry.¹ In the face of dwindling smoked tobacco sales and a commercial model built around exploitation of nicotine addiction the tobacco industry has sought expand into alternative nicotine delivery devices (ANDs), including vapes, heat-not-burn devices and oral nicotine.

Heat-not-burn devices and oral nicotine are not considered vapes, the former heats tobacco products to produce a heavier aerosol compared to vapes. The latter are solid products containing nicotine that is often in the form of a pouch that is placed between the lip and gum.

53.2%

% of Year 10 students who tried vaping in 2025



Who vapes?

Recent evidence suggests that young people are much more likely to vape than older people, and a large proportion of these have never smoked.² This is particularly concerning for Rangatahi Māori who have much higher rates compared to their non-Māori counterparts.² Compared to international figures, vaping rates among all youth in Aotearoa are much higher.³

National youth data also shows the inequity clearly. In 2025, 16.5% of Māori Year 10 students vaped daily, 23.9% vaped regularly, and 53.2% had tried vaping, with Māori girls reporting the highest regular vaping rate at 28.7% - reinforcing the need to protect rangatahi from nicotine addiction while keeping stop-smoking support available for adults who smoke.

What do vapes contain?

Vape aerosol usually contains nicotine as well as propylene glycol (also used to make artificial smoke in fog machines), and other substances known to cause cancer, and respiratory illnesses.⁴





Are vapes harmful?

This is a complex question. We are still learning about harms from vaping but we know they are not harmless.¹ Vapes are likely to be less harmful than cigarettes. For some people who smoke they might be a useful tool to quit nicotine addiction altogether, or switch to a less harmful alternative for those who are unable to quit.¹ However, vaping products occupy a grey area in terms of being seen as a legitimate smoking cessation tool. This is because they are regarded as a ‘lifestyle’ rather than a ‘therapeutic’ product.⁵ Yet recently Te Whatu Ora required all government funded cessation providers to distribute free vaping cessation kits. This was met by strong opposition from Māori health organisations.⁶

For people who don’t, or otherwise would not have smoked, vapes are very likely to cause harm.¹ In addition, some people who switch from cigarettes to using vapes may have quit their nicotine addiction entirely had vapes not been available. Harm from vaping is often understood in terms of their impacts on physical health often relative to smoking. However, when considering the perspectives of young people, this definition of ‘harm’ is relatively narrow, reflecting priorities according to Western models of health, prioritising the needs of people who smoke and, potentially, the vested interests of the nicotine industry. [Young peoples’][Rangatahi] perspectives of harm may take a broader perspective acknowledging how nicotine addiction affects mental health, a sense of agency, school performance and their social relationships.⁷



The industry, ‘harm reduction’ and the promotion of vaping

Some people advocate vaping products are a ‘harm reduction’ tool to address the harm caused by smoked tobacco.⁸ In principle harm reduction is about person centred care aimed at minimising the health, social, economic and/or legal harms⁹ associated with issues such as drug use, sexual activity or homelessness.

In the context of nicotine addiction, harm reduction advocacy has often focussed on the physical health impacts of smoking. This approach, at best, has discounted the impact on young people, or at worst, argued a fatalistic view that ‘many young people would have smoked anyway’.¹⁰ Harm reduction narratives have often been challenged as serving the interests of the nicotine industry at the expense of young people as well as at the expense of effective tobacco control policies.¹¹



Illicit nicotine

In 2021 Australia passed laws that meant vapes could only be legally accessed through a doctor’s prescription to help people stop smoking. These laws were aimed to prevent access to, mainly younger, people who had never smoked. However, vapes are now widely available through the illegal supply chains and has the potential to undermine the purpose of the laws.