

Cancer Society Social & Behavioural Research Unit

*Te Hunga Rangahau Ārai Mate Pukupuku*

# A qualitative exploration of tobacco retailers' suitability to sell electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) amid legislative change in New Zealand

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# Objectives

- To assess tobacco retailers':
  - knowledge of ENDS products
  - perceptions of the relative risks and benefits of these products
  - capacity and willingness to support ENDS users to quit smoking
  - attitudes towards selling tobacco and ENDS
  - knowledge of current legislation, and views of the proposed legislation

# Method

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with 18 owners/managers of tobacco retail outlets prior to the legislative change:
  - 9 dairies, 5 supermarkets, 3 small grocery stores, 1 petrol station
  - 9 from Otago and 9 from Wellington/Kapiti Coast
  - 8 high, 6 mid and 4 low deprivation areas

# Results

- Tobacco retailers generally had poor knowledge of ENDS products and how to use them.
- Misconception about the harm/safety of ENDS relative to tobacco
- Provided no or inappropriate advice to customers.
- Generally felt it was not their job to help customers quit smoking, and few saw ENDS as an appropriate smoking cessation tool anyway.
- Attitudes to selling ENDS largely driven by demand.
- No incentive to sell ENDS vs tobacco – tobacco incentivised through rebates, high turnover, repeat custom and ancillary sales, whereas ENDS are not.
- Most felt that the sale of ENDS should be permitted anywhere tobacco is currently sold, though some thought it would be more appropriate to limit its sale to specialist shops or pharmacies because of the expert advice required.
- Limited understanding of current ENDS legislation – most thought it was already legal.
- Typically supported the proposed legislation, though some concerns around the promotion of ENDS were raised.

# Conclusions

- Allowing any type of outlet to stock ENDS alongside tobacco may not be in the customers best interests.
- Retailers will continue to prioritise tobacco over ENDS because it is incentivised through rebates and repeat custom, whereas ENDS is not.
- Restricting ENDS sales to specialist outlets and/or pharmacies might be the best way to support smoking cessation.
- Future Research
  - Post-legislation follow-up

