



 **SAVING:** Vaping instead of smoking cigarettes could save lives and money says leading physician Dr Alex Wodak.

An eminent Australian physician says Tasmanians who switch from smoking to vaping would add years to their lives and save thousands of dollars.

Dr Alex Wodak, who has been in Tasmania this week meeting MPs and stakeholders, said lung cancer rates in all Tasmanian electorates, except Clark, were 15 per cent higher than the national average.

He said a person who smoked 20 cigarettes a day spent \$12,500 a year whereas vaping would cost \$1500 annually.

"The people in the lowest 20 per cent of incomes in Australia, so the lowest quintile, their smoking rates are two and a half times the smoking rate of people in the highest quintile.

"They smoke more cigarettes and they start smoking at an earlier age and have higher complications from smoking.

"It's very alarming. It's unfair.

"Most of that burden is borne by people who have low incomes or in other ways disadvantaged: Aboriginal Australians, people with severe mental illness, people with severe alcohol and drug problems, homeless people.

"These are the people who really have very high smoking rates and pay the price because they then die prematurely from smoking related causes.

"A lot of that could be prevented if they switched over to vaping."

Dr Wodak said Tasmanians had shorter life expectancy and among the highest smoking rates but the strictest laws against smoking.

"Something's not quite right in all of that.

"If we want to see Tasmanians live longer, healthier lives, it's clear that something new has to be done to reduce the smoking rate in Tasmania.

"Fortunately, we've got the advent of vaping so that people can still take in their much beloved nicotine without the tars and carbon monoxide and other products of combustion from combustible cigarettes.

"I don't care how people quit. But let's make available the most the world's most popular and the world's most effective way of quitting."

Dr Wodak said there had been nine increases in cigarette taxes in the past 10 years yet the quitting rates for people aged over 40 was still low.





 Physician Dr Alex Wodak. Picture: Supplied.

"It's a lot of money at a time when there are the worst economic conditions since 1929 and also we've had pretty flat wage growth for over five years in Australia," he said.

Tasmania, he said, had more to gain from embracing vaping than other states.

He is disappointed that Australia has been hostile to vaping in contrast to other developed countries but is heartened at reports of support for vaping from some Liberal and National Party MPs and senators at a meeting this week.

"Australia stands out. We're the only country that requires people who want nicotine for vaping to get a prescription from a doctor. No other country does that.

"Tasmania could go it alone on vaping but there'd be a lot of pressure over it."

Dr Wodak, who has never smoked, said two out of three long smokers would die from a smoking related conditions.

"They'll die from a cancer , or heart or lung disease mainly, and the average smoker who dies from smoking related condition loses an estimated 10 years of life.

"That's 10 years, they could have enjoyed themselves, 10 years their family have missed them, their grandkids missed them and also it has a huge effect on our economy."

Dr Wodak said he had received support for vaping from individual parliamentarians across the major parties in Tasmania.



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