# AUSTRALIAN EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF E-CIGARETTES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

We surveyed over 200 **secondary school principals and teachers** across Australia.

**55**% Women          **19**% Principals          **81**% Co-ed schools

## We asked them to report on:

- Their experiences with student e-cigarette use
- Barriers to policy development and implementation
- The presence of e-cigarette policies and educational programs
- Desired support

Here is what we found:

## POSSESSION AND USE IN SCHOOLS

**47**% of all educators surveyed reported finding a student with an e-cigarette at least monthly (24% at least weekly).

**36**% of principals reported **suspending** or **expelling** students for e-cigarette possession or use at least monthly (12% at least weekly).

# PERCEPTIONS OF USE

**93%** agreed that e-cigarette use is increasingly becoming a **problem** in Australian secondary schools.

**60%** reported that e-cigarette use on school property is becoming a moderate or very **serious problem**.

**77%** were moderately or very **concerned** about e-cigarette use by students at the school for which they work.

**80%** reported that addressing e-cigarette use was a **priority**.

**82%** had the **confidence** to address e-cigarette use but fewer (55%) had the confidence to detect e-cigarette use.

**Primary concerns** related to e-cigarette use among students included:

The health risks associated with use and the potential for addiction in students.

The ease with which use can be hidden, making it difficult to detect.

Students' lack of awareness of the harms associated with use.

Use in toilets, creating an unsafe environment.

The increasing number of younger students using e-cigarettes.

The ease with which e-cigarettes can be accessed by students.

Students selling e-cigarettes to each other.

E-cigarette use as a gateway to smoking and other drug use.

Students missing classes to engage in e-cigarette use.

# SCHOOL POLICIES AND EDUCATION

## 51%
reported that their school had a vaping policy (cf. 78% tobacco smoking policy).

The most frequently nominated **barriers to enforcement** of policy were:

- E-cigarette products being discreet in appearance.
- Difficulties pinpointing from where the vapour/scent is coming.

## 77%
reported that their school educated students on vaping (cf. 88% smoking).

Other approaches to the **management of vaping** were:

- Installation of vaping detectors
- Parental education

# DESIRED SUPPORT

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**50%** of educators reported desiring education programs for students and staff members.

**22%** desired the installation of vaping detectors.

# CONCLUSIONS

E-cigarettes are presenting a **threat** to Australian secondary school environments and **comprehensive**, **multi-level** efforts are needed to address vaping among secondary school students.

Schools and education authorities must **urgently** develop and implement targeted e-cigarette policies.

Government-led policies that reduce the accessibility and availability of e-cigarettes must be introduced to reduce the burden being placed on schools to manage student vaping.

Prohibiting the sale and importation of all e-cigarettes and related components outside the Therapeutic Goods Administrations' pharmaceutical scheme is critical to reducing the availability and accessibility of these products. This includes non-nicotine e-cigarette products, which are harmful to health and can act as a Trojan Horse for the importation and sale of nicotine products.