

First Nations Youth: A Co-Designed Vaping Pilot Project

Summary Report: June 2024

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Acknowledgments.....	2
Suggested Citation.....	2
Executive Summary	3
Background	4
LFA's work in vaping.....	4
Project Overview.....	6
Objectives	6
Target Demographic	6
Outputs	6
Co-design.....	6
Evaluation	7
Pilot group	7
i) Pilot Group Baseline Survey	7
ii) Pilot Group Post-Resource Survey	8
iii) Pilot Group Three-Month Follow-up Survey	9
Broader community use - Hotjar data	10
Dissemination and feedback from stakeholders	12
Conclusion & future direction.....	13
References.....	14
Appendix	15
Appendix A: Factsheet Vaping & the environment.....	15
Appendix B: Factsheet Health harms of vaping.....	16
Appendix C: Factsheet Quitting Vaping	17

Acknowledgments

Lung Foundation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work throughout Australia and their unceded sovereignty of and continuing connection to land and sea. We pay our respects to their cultures and to Elders both past and present. We acknowledge the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with lung diseases and lung cancer. In the spirit of reconciliation, we recommit to working with communities to close the gap on lung health and build on the strengths of communities to lead and guide the path to healthy lungs for all.

Lung Foundation Australia wishes to extend our sincere gratitude to Na Joomelah for co-designing the resources for this project, and The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS) for their support, advice, and feedback. We also appreciate the insights and feedback provided by all the youth who participated in the pilot group in the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council as your perspectives have played a crucial role in ensuring the inclusivity and relevance of these resources.

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the co-designed pilot project, conducted in collaboration between Lung Foundation Australia (LFA), Na Joomelah and The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS), which focused on developing and evaluating vaping awareness resources for First Nations youth and their families/teachers. The project objectives included enhancing awareness of the impacts of vaping on health, fostering a sense of empowerment among youth by involving them in the decision-making process of resource development, and to decrease the likelihood of youth becoming a long-term smoker/vaper.

To measure the achievement of the objectives, a multi-pronged evaluation methodology was utilised. This included a youth pilot group facilitated by Na Joomelah and a Tackling Indigenous Smoking program operated by the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council, who were surveyed at baseline, post-resource and 3-month follow-up. Surveys incorporated both closed and open-ended questions. In addition to the focus group, the vaping resources were distributed to the broader community, and evaluated using a Hotjar survey on the LFA website.

From baseline to post-resource, findings demonstrated significant improvements in the participants' behaviours and knowledge of vaping. Moreover, the 3-month follow up survey indicated that the benefits of the vaping resources were sustained, with positive feedback and insights into the effectiveness of the resources and sharing of learnings more broadly in community. The Hotjar survey findings mirror those of the pilot group, indicating that the pilot group outcomes extended to the wider population as well.

In summary, the successful achievement of all project objectives highlights the importance of culturally appropriate, co-designed resources in addressing vaping related knowledge and behaviours among First Nations youth. LFA aims to showcase the profound impact of authentic collaboration and co-design through this project's achievements and aspire for these resources to not only inform but also guide evidence-based strategies for future vaping prevention and cessation efforts.

Background

E-cigarette (vape) use in Australia has been increasing year on year, with uptake particularly of concern in youths and young adults. This trend has raised concerns particularly for teachers and parents. For instance, a 2021 Australian study⁹ that recruited 196 school staff found almost 80% of respondents expressed concern about current levels of vaping in schools. Furthermore, the Australian Secondary School Students Drug survey 2022/2023,⁷ found that 69% of students who had ever used a vape had never smoked a tobacco cigarette before their first vape, and 20% of students who had never smoked prior to trying a vape reported subsequent smoking of tobacco cigarettes. According to the National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2022–2023⁸ rates of vape use across the country tripled, with 49% of people 18-24 having used vapes, and 28% of young people aged 14-17. Further to this, 1 in 5 (21%) people aged 14 and over reported currently using vapes in 2022–2023⁸. Additionally, around half reported negative outcomes relating to mental wellbeing, social/peer interactions, and school performance. Vapes use not only increases the risk of injury and disease, but it also encourages the cycle of nicotine addiction and dependence which can be challenging to stop and can lead to the use of tobacco cigarettes or dual use³.

It is critical to note that these statistics may disproportionately impact certain demographics, including those within First Nations communities. Although data available on youth vaping is limited, between 2022-23, 1 in 3 (31%) First Nations people had reported using vapes at least once in their lifetime, compared to 1 in 7 (14.4%) non-Indigenous Australians.^{1,2} The rise in vape use, especially among young people, has the potential to normalise the use of combustible cigarettes.⁸ Research indicates that vape users are three times more likely to take up combustible cigarettes.³ To assist in the prevention of vaping-related harm in First Nations youth, the creation of culturally appropriate awareness and prevention resources is required. These resources need to incorporate and consider the broader indigenous-specific risk factors at play, such as colonisation, connection to land, and trauma.¹¹ However, currently in Australia there is a lack of culturally appropriate vaping resources for prevention and cessation in First Nations youth, which presents a significant challenge. Therefore, this project seeks to develop and evaluate co-designed vaping resources tailored to the needs and cultural contexts of First Nations youth. By utilising a co-design mechanism, this ensures that First Nations people's perspectives and experiences are centred, and resources are developed that empower and support youth to reduce vaping prevalence and promote holistic well-being.

LFA's work in vaping

LFA recognised a significant gap in education and resources for vaping and developed the 'Unveil what you inhale' resources⁵ in collaboration with young people. These resources aim to increase the understanding of the harms of e-cigarettes and equip young people, young adults, educators, and parents and carers with the knowledge to guide positive healthy behaviours. In early 2023, LFA also developed an e-Learning module⁶ which has received positive feedback around the need for such education in school.

Unveil what you inhale campaign

In 2021, LFA developed a suite of educational resources for the campaign 'Unveil what you inhale' to bring attention to the harms and unknown risks of vaping.⁵ These resources are designed by and for young Australians, educators, parents, and carers, to arm them with accurate and evidenced-based information. In a pioneering study, funded by LFA and Minderoo Foundation, researchers at Curtin University tested the chemicals and toxicity of 52 flavoured e-liquids, finding 100% of the e-liquids were inaccurately labelled and 21% contained nicotine, despite this being illegal in Australia. Evidence has continued to emerge that currently closer to 95% of e-cigarettes contain nicotine (which stems from the exploitation of current laws).

Vaping e-learning modules for young people

In March 2023, LFA launched eLearning modules for young people aiming to bring awareness to the harms of vaping, fill critical knowledge gaps around vapes and encourage participants to be vape-free advocates amongst their friends and community. Informed by the Roundtable and the emerging evidence of growing rates of youth vaping and increasing community concern, this eLearning aims to address the rapid rise in the recreational use of vapes.

Project Overview

Objectives

This project was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Enhances awareness and understanding: To ensure that First Nations youth and their families/teachers are well informed and understand their choices about vaping and its associated impact on short and long-term wellbeing and lung health.
2. Empowerment and confidence: To empower First Nations youth and their families/teachers, equipping them to make informed decisions about the advantages of living in a vape-free society.
3. Reduction in vaping prevalence: To aim to reduce the prevalence and uptake of vaping among First Nations youth, this project aimed to heighten awareness, provide resources and foster informed decision-making. This approach seeks to decrease the likelihood of individuals becoming a long-term smoker/vaper.

Target Demographic

- Primary: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth
- Secondary: Families/teachers

Outputs

Based on identified gaps, LFA's experience and feedback from previous resources developed for youth audiences, the agreed outputs were:

- Co-design of resource content creation, formatting and production including digital/web components
- Promotional campaign to increase the uptake of resources.

More specifically, this project involved the development of co-designed vaping resources for First Nations youth and their families/teachers. These resources included three culturally appropriate short and impactful animated videos and accompanying factsheets.

The animated videos covered three topic areas:

- 1) [Health harms of vaping](#),
- 2) [Environmental harms](#), and
- 3) [Impacts of vaping on daily life](#).

Accompanying factsheets were developed for individuals to self-reflect on, or to support discussion if used within class/community/group settings. These factsheets covered content from the videos, with the addition of information related to quitting vaping (see Appendix A, B, C).

Co-design

LFA partnered with Na Joomelah & The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS). The partnership from both stakeholders played a critical role to ensure that the perspectives and needs of First Nations communities and youth were centred throughout the whole development phases of the vaping resources. Na Joomelah were an active partner throughout the development including but not limited to: video scripting, story boarding, recording audio for the animations, consulting with local community, and facilitating the Pilot group.

Evaluation

To assess the achievement of project objectives, a comprehensive evaluation approach was used. This approach involved several key components. Firstly, a pilot group was formed to explore youth behaviour and knowledge at different stages (baseline, post-resource & 3-month follow up – noting the small sample size). Secondly, a Hotjar survey was used on LFA's website, incorporating questions aligned to those used with the pilot group. This allowed LFA to gauge the comparability of results between the pilot group and the broader community.

Pilot group

The pilot group was recruited through Na Joomelah's extensive contacts and local networks to ensure a representative and effective sample for this project. The stakeholders who were informed of the project recommended individuals they believed would be both relevant and impactful for the project's success, including youth who were connected through staff and other community members in the La Perouse Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Participants & sampling methodology

The project began with a total of 23 participants who identified as a First Nations person. However, in alignment with the project's selection criteria and scope, only 10 First Nations youth aged up to 15 years old, with no prior vaping usage, were included for analysis. The remaining 13 participants were aged 18+ and thus, not included in this project.

A purposive sampling method was used in this project. This method was utilised to ensure a culturally sensitive approach by recruiting participants through the existing stakeholders' (Na Joomelah) established networks and relationships.

i) Pilot Group Baseline Survey

To ensure the vaping resources were effectively measured, a baseline survey was conducted to collect participants knowledge across five categories using a 10-point agreeability scale (1= lowest and 10-highest) (see Table 2). The survey questions underwent development consultation with Na Joomelah and final review by The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS), ensuring alignment with the project objectives, while maintaining cultural appropriateness.

Table 2. Pilot Baseline Survey Questions

Questions/Statements (rated from 1 = lowest, 10 = highest)	Pre-survey data October 2023 (n=10)
1. I am confident in my ability to make informed choices about vaping.	7.6/10
2. I recognise the benefits of a vape free society.	8.7/10
3. How would you rate your understanding about how vaping can impact your wellbeing?	6.2/10
4. How would you rate your knowledge about the health impacts of vaping?	6.6/10

5. How would you rate your knowledge about the environmental impacts of vaping?	6.2/10
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ii) Pilot Group Post-Resource Survey

Similarly, the post-resource survey contained the same five categories of statements, with the addition of questions aiming to measure intention to vape, how engaging the resources were, and the likelihood of the participants to share these resources with their friends and family.

However, it's important to note that a different rating system was used compared to the pre-survey. Participants in the post-resource survey (n=9) were asked to rate their agreeability on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as opposed to the 1 to 10 scale used in the baseline survey (see Table 3).

Table 3. Post-Resource Survey Questions

Rate your agreeability with this statement: - (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)	Post-Resource data October 2023 (n=9) % of participants
1. I feel more informed about the environmental, health and social impacts of vaping.	Strongly agree - 77.8% Slightly agree -11.1% Strongly disagree -11.1%
2. I recognise the benefits of a vape free society.	Strongly agree - 100%
3. I feel confident in my ability to make informed choices about vaping.	5- Strongly agree - 100%
4. I intend not to vape.	5- Strongly agree – 100%
5. Rate how likely you are to share this resource with friends and family.	5 Strongly agree - 66.8% 4-Slightly agree – 22.2% 1-Strongly disagree - 11%
6. The videos are engaging and easy to understand.	5- Strongly agree – 100%

These post-survey results demonstrated that the majority of participants believed that the resources successfully achieved their intended outcomes of engaging and effectively communicating information about vaping and its associated impacts.

iii) Pilot Group Three-Month Follow-up Survey

In addition to the baseline and post-resource surveys, a three-month follow up survey was conducted to assess and evaluate the impact of the resources on the participants. This survey used the same questions from the baseline survey (presented in Table 2) to measure changes over time.

Furthermore, the 3-month follow up survey also included an option to provide qualitative feedback through an open text box. This feature allowed participants to share their insights on the effectiveness of the resource, suggested improvements, and additional resources. By including this feedback option, it aimed to empower participants to actively contribute to the decision-making process.

The follow up survey received a response rate of 60% (n=6) of the original baseline survey (n=10).

Table 4. Three-Month Follow-Up Survey Questions

Statements (rated from 1 = lowest, 10 = highest)	Post 3-month follow up survey January 2024 (n=6)	Percentage (%) increase from baseline survey data (n=10)
1. I am confident in my ability to make informed choices about vaping.	8.7/10	14.5%
2. I recognise the benefits of a vape free society.	8.7/10	0%
3. How would you rate your understanding about how vaping can impact your wellbeing?	8.2/10	32.3%
4. How would you rate your knowledge about the health impacts of vaping?	8.3/10	25.8%
5. How would you rate your knowledge about the environmental impacts of vaping?	6.8/10	9.7%

(Note: response rate may have been impacted by factors such as timing being in early January 2024- a period when the participants' parents and/or staff may have still been returning from end of 2023 year leave).

The data indicated that even 3 months after the baseline survey, the benefits of the vaping resources were sustained. The follow-up survey shows increases ranging from 9-32% in all the statements (Table 2), apart from the "vape free society" score. It is important to acknowledge that changing societal attitudes and beliefs on a "a vape free society" may take longer than 3 months to change, hence this may not have been captured as an increase in the period of the 3-month follow up survey. Extending the follow-up period could provide a clearer picture of long-term shifts in attitudes, a consideration that LFA will prioritise in future monitoring efforts.

In addition to the quantitative data, the qualitative data provided noteworthy insights into the influence of the vaping videos and resources on personal success stories and testimonials. Some of the notable qualitative data about how the resources have helped the participants included:

"It was very easy to understand. I showed my family & friends."

"Very informative. When I speak to my friends, I show it to them."

"I've seen this resource at school."

"They [vaping videos] provided me information about things I wouldn't have known about. It has taught me a lot about it."

"It has helped me to understand the impacts of vaping better."

When participants were questioned about what additional resources might be beneficial to increase awareness for youth on the negative effects of vaping, participants advocated for LFA to increase further promotion of these videos:

"Having it around more."

"Just getting more awareness."

"Resources for second hand vaping"

"More videos!"

The positive stakeholder feedback & survey data obtained indicated that the vaping resources created meaningful impacts in raising awareness about the negative short- and long-term health impacts of vaping, through a culturally appropriate lens.

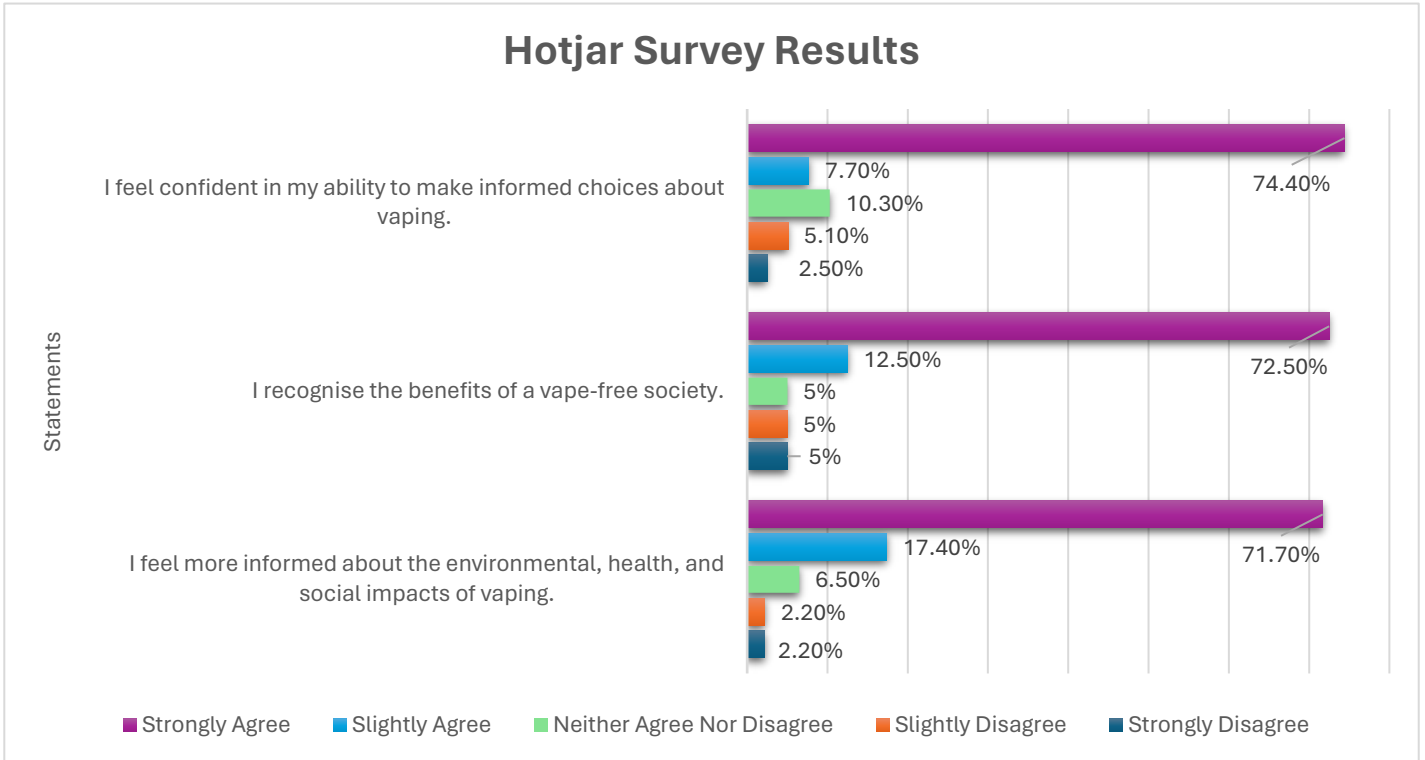
Broader community use - Hotjar data

Further to the pilot surveys, the project expanded the evaluation scope to gather broader community satisfaction ratings using a Hotjar survey feature on the LFA website. The Hotjar survey used a rating system ranging from 1- 5 (1=Strongly disagree –5= Strongly agree) and consisted of three evaluation statements:

1. I feel more informed about the environmental, health and social impacts of vaping.
2. I recognise the benefits of a vape free society.
3. I feel confident in my ability to make informed choices about vaping.

The Hotjar feature allowed the project to gather valuable insights into how the broader community engaged with the vaping resources. The results showed an average of 42 respondents with a remarkable satisfaction rating of 85% (average across three questions), surpassing the projects' 75% KPI target. When comparing the findings against the post-resource data, we observe similar trends suggesting a rise in agreeability regarding knowledge across the three questions among the broader population, with agreeability ranging from 71-74% (refer to Figure 1: Hotjar Results). The upward trajectory of this data implies a significant level of acceptance within the broader community, indicating the resource's effectiveness and influence extend beyond its initial target audience of First Nations Youth and their parents and teachers. This underscores the potential value of dissemination within the broader community.

Figure 1: Hotjar Results



Dissemination and feedback from stakeholders

The dissemination strategy in this project utilised a multifaceted approach consisting of distribution to multiple channels to ensure maximum reach and impact of the vaping resources, including the use of:

- Organic social media posts through LFA platforms
- Creation of LFA website page
- YouTube uploads of the three animated videos
- Direct emails through LFA contacts
- Distribution through Na Joomelah & The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS) stakeholder networks.

The resources received endorsement from The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS) team, who disseminated them across Australia to their dedicated teams actively engaging with youth about vaping. This is accompanied by anecdotal feedback from jurisdictional health departments providing extremely positive feedback on the quality of the resources.

Table 5: Dissemination modality and reach

Type of Dissemination Channel:	Total Data between 31 st October 2023- 31 st January 2024:
First Nations website	Total users: 708
YouTube Videos: Vaping and the environment Health harms of vaping Choosing to be vape free	Total views: 249 Total views: 2,083 Total views: 240
Social media reach & engagement (including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn & Twitter/X):	Total reach: 12,582 Total engagement: 423

Note: During the period of this project, the social media landscape had changed, meaning LFA was unable to use paid social media to promote these resources to First Nations youth. This meant that the project relied on the dissemination methods of our valued stakeholders.

Conclusion & future direction

In conclusion, this report offers a comprehensive overview of a co-designed pilot project conducted in collaboration with Na Joomelah and The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS), aimed at developing and evaluating vaping awareness resources for First Nations youth and their families/teachers. The project's objectives were to enhance awareness of the impacts of vaping, empower First Nations youth to make informed choices, and to decrease the likelihood of individual's adopting long-term vaping habits. The project effectively met these goals, as can be seen in this report. These results included noteworthy improvements in vaping-related behaviours and knowledge among participants through the baseline and post-resource surveys. Additionally, the sustained benefits of the resources were demonstrated in the 3-month follow-up survey, with participants providing valuable feedback on their learnings and the overall effectiveness of the vaping resources.

While no further funding has been sourced at this stage, the vaping resources that were co-designed will continue to be hosted on the LFA website, with ongoing organic promotion through social media channels, with the Tackling Indigenous Smoking teams free to use the videos as part of their community engagement. LFA highly valued the positive co-design process with both Na Joomelah and The National Best Practice Unit Tackling Indigenous Smoking (NBPU TIS) and would like to again acknowledge their significant contribution to this project.

Given the success of this project, LFA is eager to continue to seek opportunities to expand on these resources, ensuring they stay responsive to emerging trends, are culturally relevant, evidence-based and used locally. The insights gained from this project stand poised to inform evidence-based strategies for future vaping prevention and cessation efforts, highlighting the potential for lasting positive impact on the health and well-being of First Nations communities.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Factsheet Vaping & the environment

Vaping and the environment

Our land and waterways rely on us to keep them clean and healthy.

Vapes are harmful to the environment. The waste from vapes pollutes our land and waterways with toxic chemicals, heavy metals and microplastics.

Plastic waste

Vapes are devices made of plastics that do not biodegrade. These plastics build up in our land and waterways as they take hundreds of years to break down. Over time, vapes release microplastics into the environment. These microplastics are consumed by marine animals and have been found in the food we eat and the water we drink.

Hazardous waste

Vapes contain hazardous materials including nicotine, lithium and various toxic chemicals. Because they are a hazardous waste, they need to be disposed of differently to regular waste. Vapes contain chemicals that can be poisonous to fish and other aquatic life. These chemicals can also contaminate our drinking water.

Electronic waste

Vapes are powered by lithium-ion batteries. They also have other electronic parts. When damaged or placed under extreme heat, vapes can explode and cause fires in bins, garbage trucks, landfills or wherever they are thrown away. In addition to being a fire hazard, they can leach heavy metals and battery acid into the environment.

You can help protect our land and waterways.

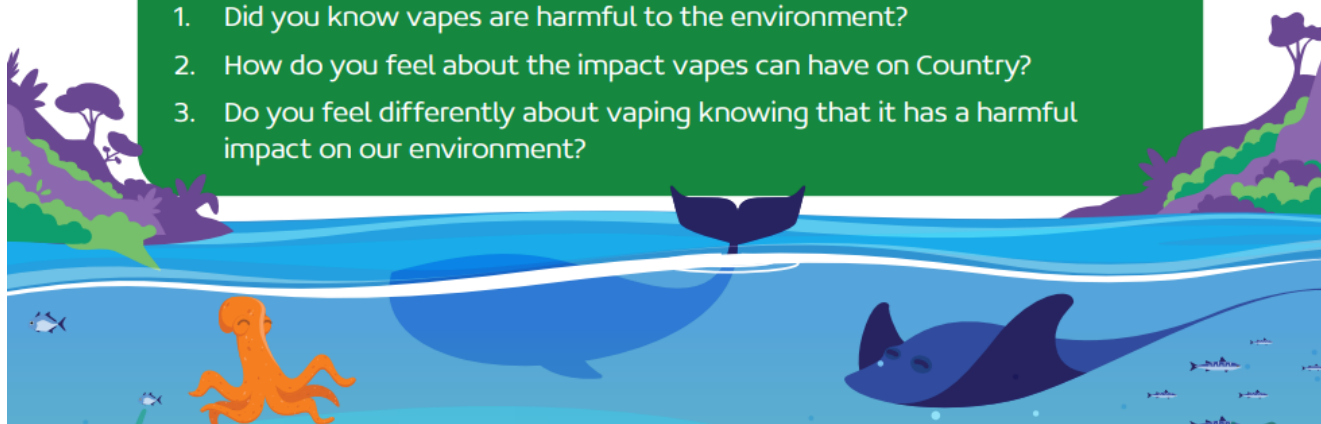
Choose **vape free for Country**



After reading this information and watching the video, think about the questions below or discuss them with your mob.

Reflection questions:

1. Did you know vapes are harmful to the environment?
2. How do you feel about the impact vapes can have on Country?
3. Do you feel differently about vaping knowing that it has a harmful impact on our environment?



Appendix B: Factsheet Health harms of vaping

Health harms of vaping

Vapes are harmful to your body. Vaping can make you sick with symptoms like:



Vomiting



Mouth and airway irritation



Chest pain



Racing heartbeat.

Vaping can damage your lungs, cause burns and lead to serious health issues.

Vapes have been found to contain over 200 toxic chemicals and flavourings that are dangerous to inhale. Some of the chemicals that have been found in vapes are also used:



To preserve dead things



In cleaning products



In paint



In petrol

Vapes can also be harmful to the people around you. Breathing in second-hand aerosol from vapes can irritate eyes, airways, and worsen respiratory conditions.

Almost all vapes sold in Australia contain nicotine, even if they say they don't. Nicotine is a toxic and highly addictive chemical, which can harm young developing brains. One vape can contain as much nicotine as 50 cigarettes.

Keep your body safe and make healthy choices.

Choose vape free for you and me

After reading this information and watching the video, think about the questions below or discuss them with your mob.



Reflection questions:

1. What do you think vaping can do to your lungs?
2. How do you feel when someone vapes around you?
3. Do you think about what you or other people might be inhaling when vaping?



NA JOOMELAH
Tackling Indigenous Smoking



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Appendix C: Factsheet Quitting Vaping

Quitting vaping

Choosing to be vape free is good for you, those around you, and the environment. Knowing what supports are available to you, or how you can help others, can make quitting easier.

Why can it be hard to quit vaping?

Most vapes contain nicotine which is very addictive. Repeated use of nicotine can change pathways in the brain related to learning, stress and self-control. This is why it can be difficult to quit, but a positive mindset, resources and support can make it easier.

Quitting vaping can help improve both your mental and physical wellbeing. Knowing why you want to quit vaping can help you stay on track and reach your goal to be vape free. There are many reasons why you may choose to quit:

- Improve your physical health so you can perform better in activities like sport
- Reduce feelings of stress and anxiety
- Save money
- Keep the environment clean and healthy.

Tell your family and friends that you're ready to quit so they can support you too. You can make the right choice.

Choose vape free

After reading this information and watching the video, think about the questions below or discuss them with your mob.



Reflection questions:

1. How else do you think vaping could or does impact your life negatively?
2. What would you buy with money that might have been spent on vapes?
3. How would you talk to family, friends or others about quitting vaping?

You aren't alone if you are trying to quit vaping. There are a range of support services available to help you.

- Call Aboriginal Quitline when you're ready to yarn about quitting on **13 78 48** and ask to speak with an Aboriginal counsellor. The Quitline operates at different times in each state or territory.
- Join the Aboriginal Quitline Facebook page facebook.com/Aboriginalquitline
 - You can also check out the Koori Quitline Facebook page: facebook.com/AboriginalQuitlineNSW
- Get in touch with your local Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) team for information about where to get further support: tacklingsmoking.org.au/tis-team-activities/
- For mental health support, visit WellMob for further resources: wellmob.org.au



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