



Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance
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C-ECTF-23/13738

Mr Herschel Baker
Queensland Director
Drug Free Australia

31 JAN 2024

Email: drugfreeaust@drugfree.org.au

Dear Mr Baker

Thank you for your letter dated 24 October 2023, in relation to smoking and vaping in schools.

I appreciate you sharing your concern regarding offences designed to protect children from smoking, reducing smoking and vaping in young people is a critical priority for the Miles Government, and significant investments continue to be made to improve education around the risks of these behaviours. In relation to Arethusa College, please be assured that Queensland Health investigates all complaints of smoking and vaping at schools. Where non-compliance with the smoking laws is identified, appropriate enforcement action is undertaken, which may include providing information and resources to help a school achieve compliance. The department is unable to disclose the details of specific investigations, however I am advised that Arethusa College's approach to student use of smoking products at or near the school has changed over time. The college would be best placed should you require further information on this.

All Queensland schools are legislated smoke-free areas under the requirements of the *Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998*. Smoking and vaping is banned in all enclosed and outdoor areas of school facilities, in school carparks, and within a five-metre buffer around the perimeter of school property. These bans apply before, during, and after school hours, on weekends and during school holidays.

Amendments to the *Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998* in June 2023, clarified that parents and guardians cannot supply smoking products to their children. Other adults, including school staff, cannot supply smoking products to children even if a parent provides permission.

I am pleased to advise that Queensland Health is investing \$28.4 million over five years to reduce the rates of vaping. Enhanced enforcement of the smoking and medicines laws will help detect, deter, and disrupt the illegal supply of vapes and tobacco. Quitline will be expanded to support more Queenslanders, including young people, to quit vaping and/or tobacco smoking. Queensland Health will also partner with the Department of Education to co-design, pilot, and evaluate a school-based nicotine dependency support program to support students to quit.

I understand the Department of Education is also investing \$5 million to provide all state and non-state secondary schools with access to the innovative alcohol and drug education program, the Blurred Minds Academy, which includes specific modules on vaping.

I am advised by the Department of Education that the Australian Curriculum Health and Physical Education focus area of Alcohol and Other Drugs, takes a developmental and age appropriate approach to students' knowledge and understandings across Prep to Year 10;

- in Prep, students develop actions to keep themselves safe and healthy;
- in Year 5 and 6, students learn how to refuse drugs;
- in Years 7 and 8, students propose strategies to make informed choices and analyse norms and stereotypes that may influence their decision making about drugs and risk-taking behaviours; and
- in Years 9 and 10, students propose strategies to support the development of preventive health practices that build and optimise community health and wellbeing.

The Department of Education has also advised that vaping is specifically addressed in the revised Alcohol and Other Drugs Program from Years 7 to 10. The program will provide students with the most up to date information about the dangers of vaping and other drugs, encourage them to make healthy choices, and resist the pressures that may lead to experimentation with harmful substances.

Thank you again for writing to me. Should you require any further information in relation to this matter, I have arranged for Mr Mark West, Executive Director, Prevention Strategy Branch, Department of Health, on telephone 3328 9835, to be available to assist you.

Yours sincerely



Shannon Fentiman MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services
Minister for Women
Member for Waterford