**Media release: 29 March 2017**

**Legalising nicotine for vaping supportive move by Government**

There’s been no sympathy for smokers or the retailers who sell cigarettes. Harsh measures to stub out smoking means just 15% of New Zealanders still smoke. Sales of tobacco have continued to drop on average by 5% per year. But, academics have warned that New Zealand will still not achieve its Smokefree goal of less than 5% smoking by 2025 unless something radical is done.

Legalising nicotine for vaping is the radical step that was needed. Anecdotal reports suggest that many smokers have tried electronic cigarettes but mixed messages about the risks of vaping put many off.

“Access to nicotine e-liquid remains a barrier to completely and permanently transitioning from smoking to vaping.” Said Associate Professor Marewa Glover, Chair of End Smoking. “Vapers are vulnerable to relapse to smoking if their order of nicotine e-liquid from overseas doesn’t arrive before they run out.”

Dr Penny Truman, Trish Fraser, Dr Murray Laugesen and Dr Glover conducted a survey of NZ vapers with funds from the Health Research Council and the Ministry of Health funded Tobacco Control Research Tūranga programme. They found that it can take people a while to find the right e-cigarette device, the right flavor e-liquid and strength of nicotine to enable a complete and permanent transition to vaping.

“The ban on the import of nicotine for vaping, lack of access to knowledgeable advice on which vaporizer to buy, scare-mongering about vaping being as dangerous as smoking and unsupportive attitudes among health professionals and the public towards people who vape were identified as the main problems undermining a smooth and fast transition.” Glover said.

A new study by Yong & others comparing countries restricting access to vaping products (Australia and Canada) with countries where access to vaping products is similar to access to tobacco (United Kingdom and the U.S.A) found that smokers had greater success switching to vaping in the UK and USA. Relapse to smoking occurred more in Australia and Canada.

“Legalising nicotine for vaping is the most supportive action Government has taken to help smokers since they subsidized nicotine replacement products over 10 years ago. We hope it signals a more understanding and compassionate approach will be adopted towards the dwindling number of smokers from now on.” Said Glover.

**Contact:**

Associate Professor Marewa Glover - Ph: 027 27 57 852

Email: m.glover@massey.ac.nz