



Statement from Dr Samuel Murray, Managing Director, Quit Clinics

Quit Clinics and I are shocked to learn about the death of Mr Peter Hansen. We would like to pass on our condolences to his family.

Quit Clinics was made aware of Mr Hansen's death, when contacted by 730 on 14 December. None of Quit Clinics doctors has viewed his autopsy report. Due to patient-doctor confidentiality it would be inappropriate to comment further about Mr Hansen's case.

Quit Clinics provides a specialist telehealth smoking cessation service and is dedicated to helping smokers quit. Part of this service includes advice on the short-term, tapered use of vaping products.

All Quit Clinics doctors are TGA-authorized prescribers of nicotine vaping products and provide all patients with a weaning schedule to assist in not only quitting smoking but quitting nicotine altogether.

Within one month of their initial consultation, all new Quit Clinics patients are mailed a one-off Quit Clinics identification card and other supporting materials, which includes information that reinforces the short-term use of vaping, a reminder of their weaning schedule to taper their nicotine use over time, and information to encourage patients to use a reputable supplier who can provide safety and testing data for their products.

Prior to being contacted by 730 we were unaware of any Quit Clinics patient having significant adverse impacts from nicotine vaping.

Current medical research suggests that vaping is significantly safer than smoking, but to be clear, vaping is not risk free. As such, nicotine vaping should only be used by smokers who have been unable to quit via safer, more established methods, as per TGA and Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) recommendations.

As the RACGP guidelines state:

"For people who have tried to achieve smoking cessation with first-line therapy (combination of behavioural support and Therapeutic Goods Administration-approved pharmacotherapy) but failed and are still motivated to quit smoking, nicotine vaping products may be a reasonable intervention to recommend along with behavioural support."

Any risk associated with vaping, needs to be balanced with the established risks of smoking, which remains the leading cause of preventable death in Australia, killing more than 20,000 Australians annually.

Quit Clinics strongly supports investigating any concerns that relate to deaths attributed to vaping, by the appropriate bodies, such as coroners, the TGA and state and federal health departments.

More research is needed in the area of tobacco harm reduction, including the safety and efficacy of vaping. Quit Clinics, and its doctors continually review the latest research in this space, and we will continue to review our procedures and prescribing practices as research continues to emerge.

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