

PUBLIC ADVISORY

THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF BLACK-MARKET NICOTINE VAPES & ILLICIT E-LIQUIDS IN AUSTRALIA

A Message to the Australian Public

Illicit nicotine vapes and black-market e-liquids circulating in Australia pose **serious, immediate, and unpredictable risks** to your health. These products are not regulated, not tested, and not manufactured under any safety standards. They frequently contain **toxic chemicals, industrial solvents, heavy metals, and dangerous levels of nicotine** — including substances never approved for human inhalation.

This advisory explains **why these products are far more dangerous than legal, regulated nicotine products**, and why Australians should **stop purchasing and using illicit vapes immediately**.

1. What's Really Inside Black-Market Nicotine Liquids

Independent laboratory testing in Australia has revealed that illicit vapes often contain:

- **Nicotine levels 10–20 times higher** than stated
- **Nicotine in products labelled “nicotine-free”**
- **6-methylnicotine**, a potent analogue with unknown long-term effects
- **Ethylene glycol**, the chemical used in antifreeze
- **Industrial solvents** not approved for inhalation
- **Heavy metals** such as lead, nickel, and chromium
- **Flavour chemicals** at concentrations hundreds of times higher than food-safe levels

These substances can cause **acute poisoning, lung injury, neurological harm, and long-term respiratory disease**.

2. Why Illicit Vapes Are More Dangerous Than Legal Nicotine Products

Legal nicotine products — including regulated tobacco — are subject to **strict manufacturing, chemical, and safety controls**. Illicit vapes are not.

Illicit vapes are dangerous because:

- They are made in **unregulated, unsanitary environments**
- They contain **unknown chemicals** and **unpredictable doses**

- They are often **tampered with, refilled, or adulterated**
- They are produced by **criminal networks**, not legitimate manufacturers
- They bypass all **health warnings, quality checks, and safety standards**

Legal nicotine products carry known risks. Illicit vapes carry **unknown, uncontrolled, and often extreme risks**.

3. Health Risks You Should Be Aware Of

Immediate risks

- Nicotine poisoning
- Severe coughing, chest pain, and breathing difficulty
- Chemical burns to the throat and lungs
- Heart palpitations and arrhythmias
- Nausea, vomiting, dizziness

Long-term risks

- Chronic lung disease
- Heavy-metal accumulation in the body
- Increased cancer risk
- Permanent respiratory damage
- Addiction from hidden high-dose nicotine

These risks are **significantly higher** with illicit products due to contamination and chemical instability.

4. Why Criminal Networks Push These Products

Illicit nicotine products are a **major revenue stream** for organised crime groups operating in Australia. Purchasing them:

- Funds **money laundering, drug trafficking, and violent crime**
- Supports **firebombings, extortion, and gang activity**
- Undermines legitimate Australian retailers
- Deprives the Commonwealth of essential public revenue

Every illicit vape purchased strengthens the financial base of criminal syndicates.

5. How to Protect Yourself and Your Family

Stop buying illicit vapes immediately

If you choose to use nicotine, use **only legal, regulated products**.

Be wary of:

- “Nicotine-free” vapes — they almost always contain nicotine
- Brightly coloured, cartoon-themed packaging
- Extremely sweet or confectionery flavours
- Unlabelled or foreign-labelled devices
- Cash-only sellers or social-media sellers

Report illicit sellers

If you encounter suspicious products or sellers, report them to local authorities or Crime Stoppers.

6. Key Message

Illicit nicotine vapes are not safe, not regulated, and not predictable. They contain chemicals that can **seriously harm or kill**, and they fund criminal activity across Australia.

Protect your health. Protect your family. Protect your community. Do not buy illicit nicotine products.