

VAPOUR PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION SELF-REGULATES AND LAUNCHES YOUTH ACCESS PREVENTION FOR ITS MEMBERS

- Members pledge and commit to No Sale to anyone Under 18.
- Series of activities in the coming month to continue ensuring no sale to Underage

(Pretoria: 23 March 2021): Today, the Vapour Products Association of South Africa (VPASA) launches its hard-hitting Youth Access Prevention campaign, which sees manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers of e-cigarettes under its umbrella pledge to not sell vapour products to under-18s – or be subjected to a disciplinary process.

VPASA's focus is twofold: to self-regulate its members to protect access to youth while also securing the right to the use of these products by existing adult vapers and smokers who are seeking a less-harmful alternative to combustible cigarettes.

"We believe that all e-cigarette role-players have a responsibility to prevent young people from accessing our products and, in the absence of applicable laws in South Africa, are taking it upon ourselves to self-regulate to achieve optimal outcomes for all," says Asanda Gcoyi, CEO of VPASA.

VPASA is currently opposing moves in South Africa to regulate vapour products alongside traditional cigarettes, arguing that e-cigarettes are not the same as combustible tobacco products, and so should not share the same legislative platform. VPASA's position is insisting that the government will remove an option from millions of South African smokers who are seeking harm-reduced alternatives to cigarettes.

But they stand firm on their commitment to excluding youth access from their buyer profile.

The campaign will see VPASA members pledge to refuse all sales to under-18s, with the organisation extending an invitation to others in the industry to also participate in order to strengthen the commitment. Members also agree to an industry-imposed disciplinary process should they be found to contravene these self-imposed regulations. VPASA will leverage mystery shoppers and similar interventions to ensure compliance. Among the steps retailers will be obliged to take at the point of sale will be visual identification and a request for identification if they are in any doubt as to the age of the purchaser. No sales will be made to youngsters wearing school uniforms.

"We are red-flagging this very important issue, with the introduction of actionable interventions to discourage youngsters from using e-cigarettes, because we believe as an industry, we are capable of setting an appropriate regulatory agenda that is in the best interests of everyone," Gcoyi explains.

VPASA is also dedicating its monthly Vaping Conversations diginar series on 25 March to the topic, issuing an invitation to legislative bodies, industry stakeholders and members of the public to attend. This aligns with the organisation's commitment to effective education around the topic.

Gcoyi adds that VPASA hopes the campaign will provide concrete proof of the depth of the organisation's commitment to helping South Africa meet its objectives in terms of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The WHO FCTC treaty is clear on its definition of Tobacco Control. It requires member nations to protect present and future generations through harm reduction strategies that "aim to improve the health of populations by eliminating or reducing their consumption of tobacco products and exposure to tobacco smoke."

Thus far, vaping has been proven to be one of the best harm reduction tools across multiple countries, including the United Kingdom (UK).

"Far from being an industry at odds with this goal, we want to send a very clear message to the government that we want to work with them, as well as that we are a sector that is capable of acting responsibly in areas such as the prevention of youth access to ENDS, where it arguably matters most," Gcoyi concludes.

ENDS

For media enquiries, please contact Zainab Slemang van Rijmenant at zainab@irvinepartners.co.za or visit vpasa.org.za for more information.

About the Vapour Products Association of South Africa

The Vapour Products Association of South Africa (VPASA) works together with the government and other stakeholders to develop legal regulations and standards for the vapour products industry, and to ensure consumers have access to information related to vapour products and their effects. vpasa.org.za