



# Welcome to the **Positive Choices Webinar Series**

[positivechoices.org.au](http://positivechoices.org.au)



@pos\_choices



@positivechoices1



**Australian Government**  
Department of Health  
and Aged Care



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**SYDNEY**  
—  
Matilda Centre



# Acknowledgement of country

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I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. I am currently on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and pay my respects to Elders, past and present. I further acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which you are and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us for the webinar today.

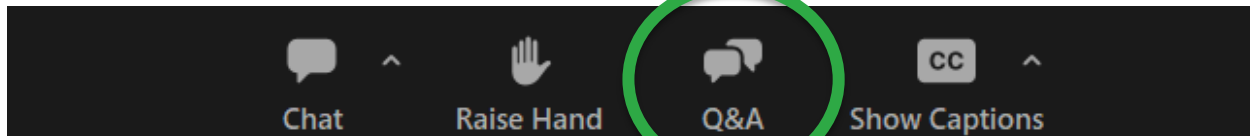


# Housekeeping

1 Listen only mode.

2 This webinar is being recorded and will be made available on the Positive Choices website.

3 We will have a Q&A session at the end of the webinar. Please add questions to the Q&A box available.





# What is Positive Choices?

[positivechoices.org.au](http://positivechoices.org.au)



#### Teachers & Schools

Evidence-based teaching programs and activities, webinars for teachers, and resources for your students



#### Parents & Families

Parenting advice and information to help you talk to your children about drugs and alcohol



#### Students

Facts, advice and interactive tools to help you find out information about drugs and alcohol and make positive choices



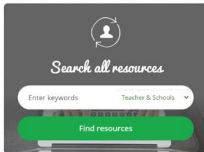
#### Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Peoples

Evidence based drug education resources for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse communities



#### Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples

A collection of culturally appropriate resources based on research and consultation with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities



- Central access point for trustworthy, up-to-date drug and alcohol information and educational resources.
- Developed by the Matilda Centre in consultation with teachers, parents and students. Funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.
- Learning resources, factsheets, videos, webinars and games to engage young people with drug education.
- Access to classroom-based drug prevention programs that are proven to reduced drug-related harms.



[positivechoices.org.au](http://positivechoices.org.au)

# Developing vaping and smoking resources for Aboriginal young people – youth voice & partnerships

Associate Professor Emily Stockings

Mr Tariq Isaacs

Dr Steph Kershaw

The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, the University of Sydney


10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.



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The background of the slide features a repeating pattern of stylized hands in various colors (white, yellow, grey) arranged in circular motifs. A large, light grey speech bubble is positioned in the upper left quadrant, containing the text.

"I would want to hear from,  
another teenager...like  
another kid, probably..."







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## Developing vaping and smoking resources for young Aboriginal peoples – youth voice & partnerships

A/Prof Emily Stockings, Mr Tariq Isaacs, Dr Steph Kershaw  
*Positive Choices Webinar: 9th September, 2024*

# Overview

- **Introduction to the research team**
- **Smoking & vaping trends and harms (Emily)** 
- **Setting up & running the project** – Aboriginal reference group, focus groups, evaluation and feedback process (Steph and Tariq)  
- **Vaping update & how the resources can be used (Emily)** 
- **Questions/feedback**

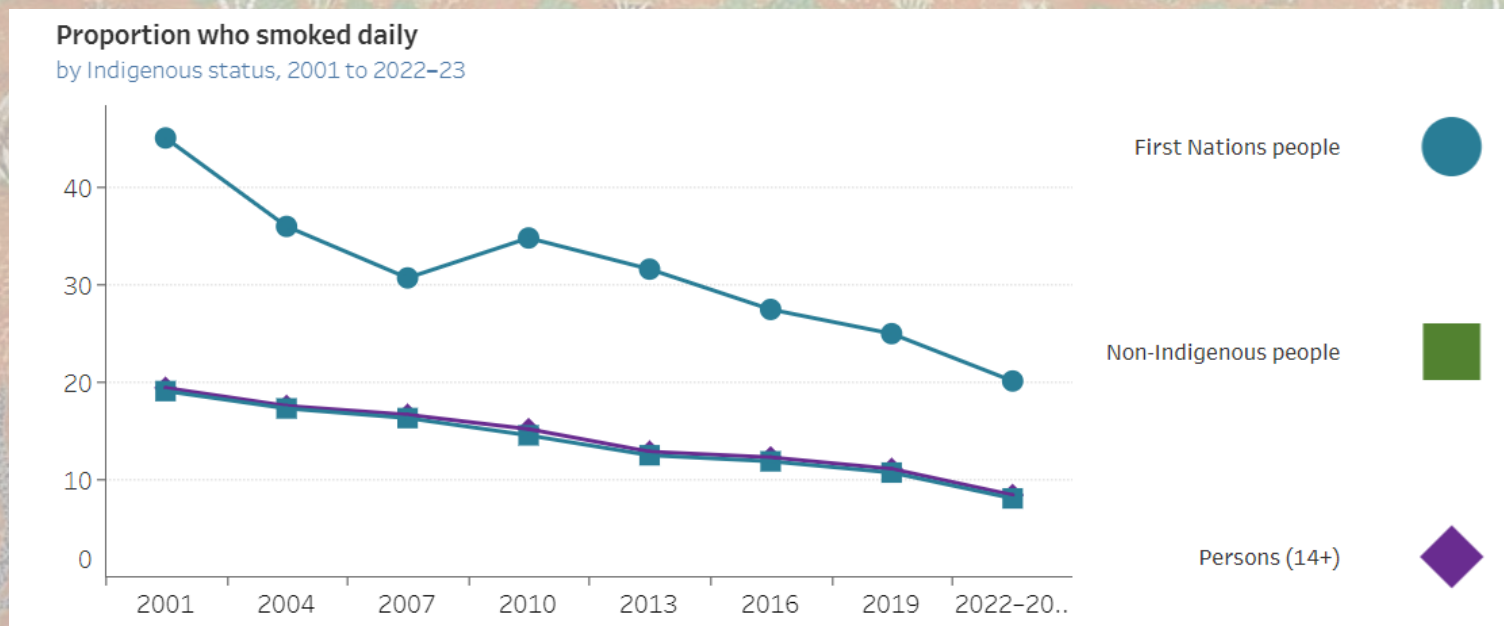


# Trends in vaping

- In 2022/3 the National Drug Strategy Household Survey<sup>1</sup> found that:
  - **Vaping is increasing across all groups**
  - **1 in 3** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 14+ had ever tried a vape
  - **Around 7% used vapes regularly**
  - **1 in 20 (5%) both smoked and used vapes**
  - **Rates were 1.5 times higher than non-indigenous people**
- Very few data sources available focusing on youth specifically!

# Trends in smoking

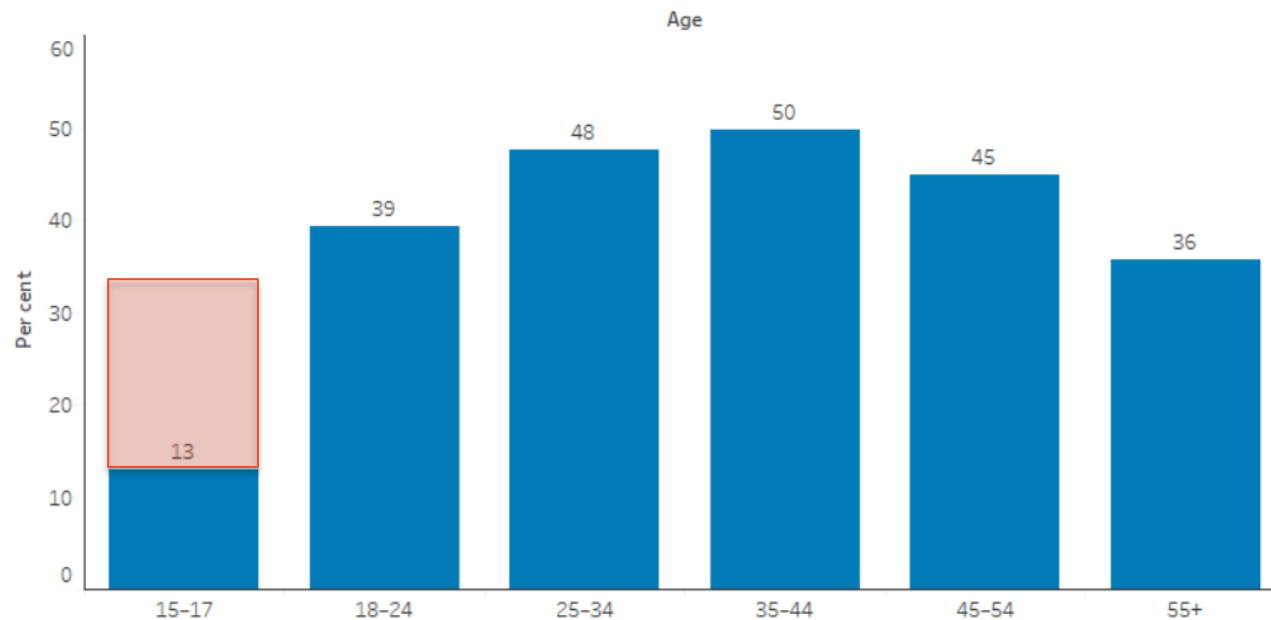
- **1 in 5 (20%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people smoked daily in 2022/23**
- ***Significant decrease* from 2010 (35%) – mostly driven by more young people not starting**
- **Rates still 2.6 times higher than non-Indigenous people**



# Some good news...

- Greatest reductions in smoking seen among **young Indigenous people**
- **Those who never smoked increased from 62 > 85%**
- **Current smokers fell from 33% to 13%**

Figure 2.15.2: Proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over reporting they are a current smoker, by age group, 2018-19



Source: Table D2.15.1. AIHW and ABS analysis of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2018-19.

# Impact on lung and respiratory health

## Vaping increases inflammation in the airways, leading to breathing difficulties

- Ingredients propylene glycol (hydrophilic) and vegetable glycerine > **increased cough, mucus secretions, chest tightness and reduced lung function**
- Can intensify asthma symptoms and trigger asthma attacks
- **2-fold increase in chronic bronchitic symptoms in adolescents<sup>2</sup>** – inc. chronic cough, phlegm and bronchitis

# Impact on the brain

The adolescent brain is **particularly vulnerable** to the effects of nicotine – early exposure can change brain development

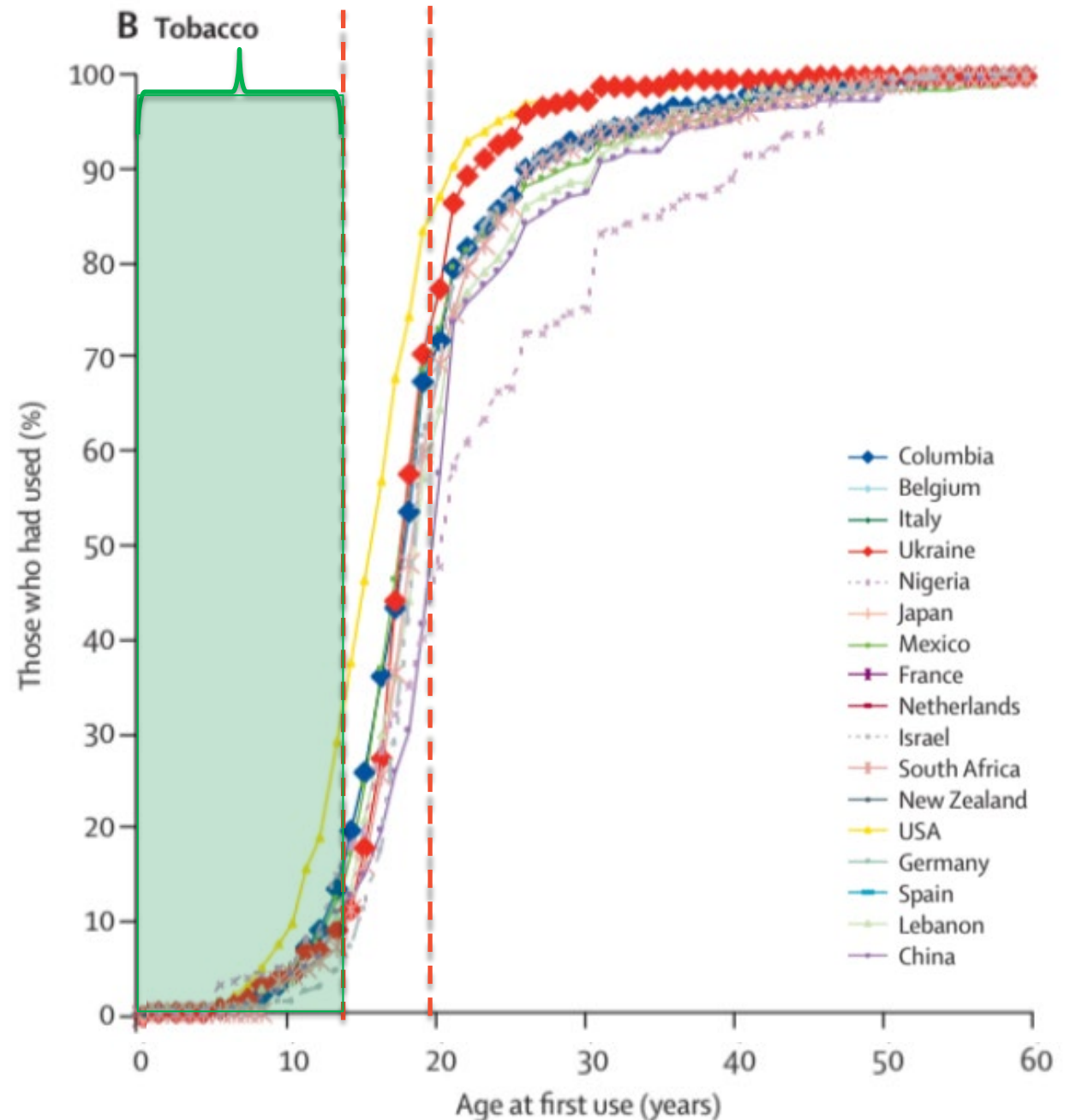
Early nicotine exposure can “**wire**” your brain to be more addicted to nicotine, as well as:

- Increased risk comorbid substance use, other addictions
- Anxiety, depression and other mental disorders
- Impaired coping, poor sleep, disrupted schooling

# A key period for substance use onset

Median age of onset for tobacco use falls between **16-19 years**, regardless of country/culture

**Primary prevention:** intervene *before* use begins



# Prevent vaping and smoking in young Aboriginal young people

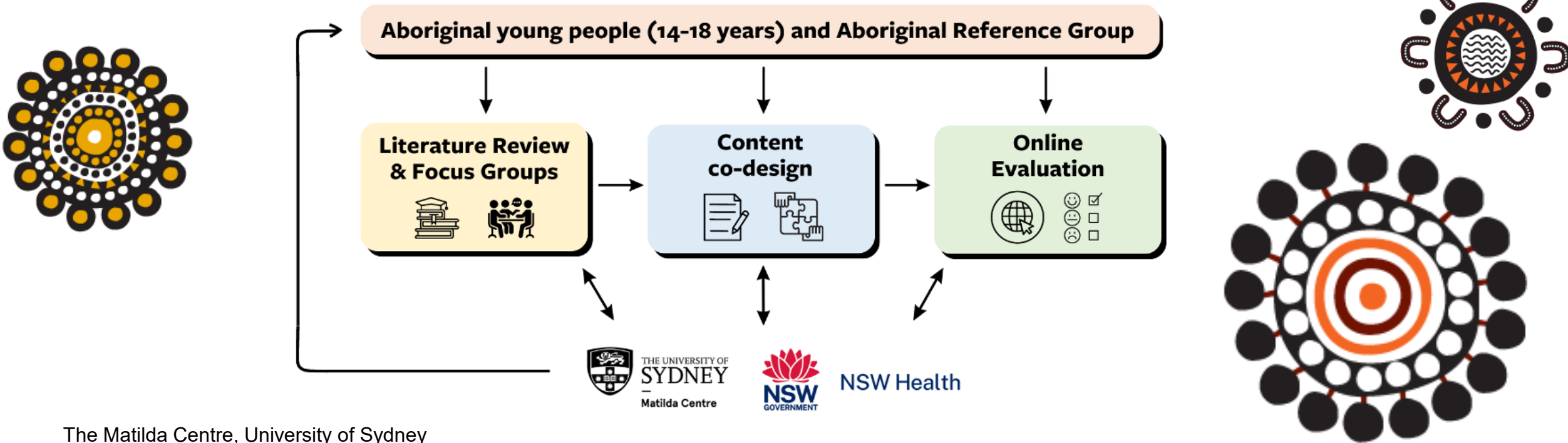
**Partnership with NSW Health: Design and evaluate smoking and vaping digital resources for young Aboriginal people.**

**Key to this project - Aboriginal young people were members of the research team from the beginning to end and included members of the Matilda Centre Youth Advisory Board**



# Project design

1. Two formal consultations with Aboriginal young people
2. Partnered with Garuwa, an NSW-based Aboriginal owned, and led, digital agency
3. Guided by an Aboriginal Reference Group



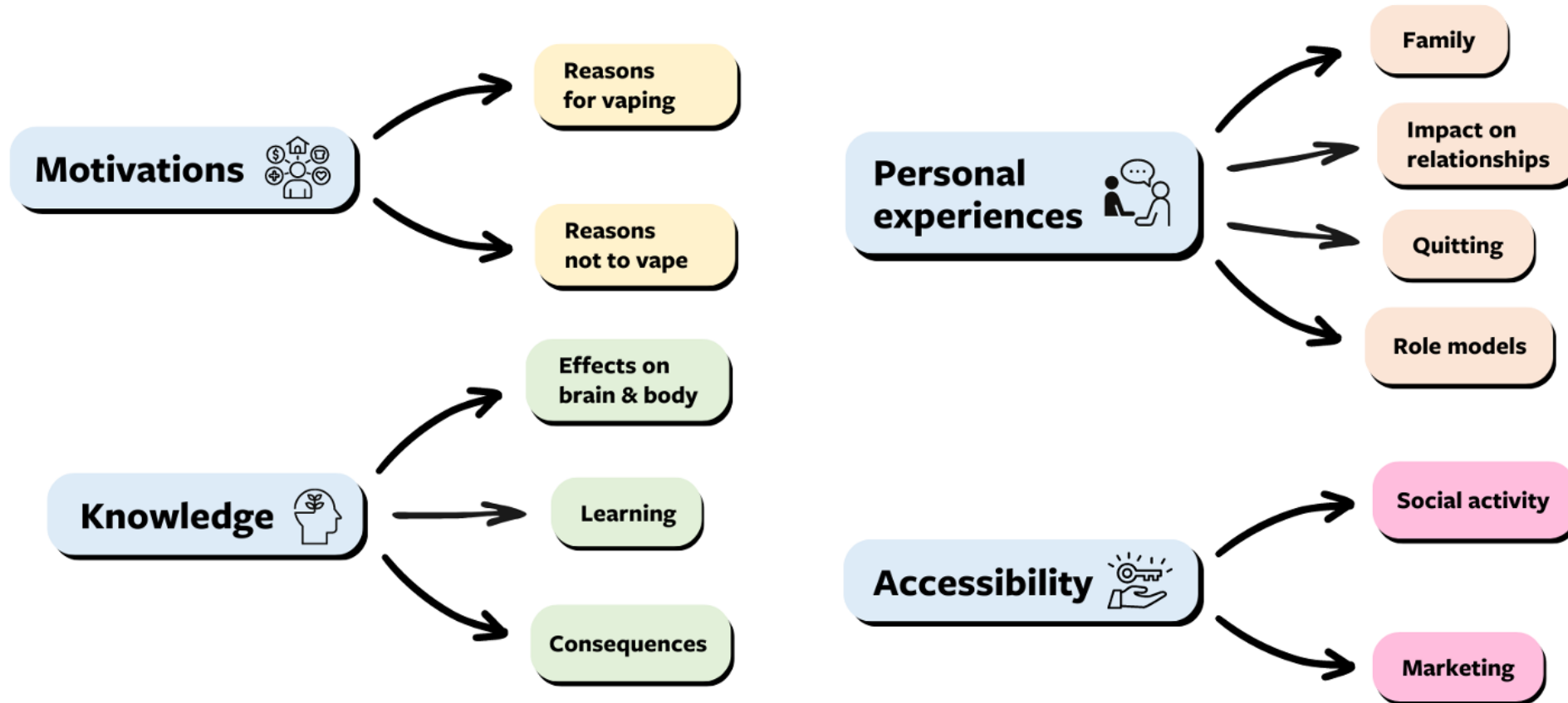


# Phase 1: Focus groups

- Two focus groups (n=15) were held to understand Aboriginal young people's current knowledge and experiences
  - Two-thirds were in high school (Year 10-12)
  - Mean age: 18  $\pm$ 2.4; 66.7% Male, 26.7% Female, 6.7% Non-binary
  - 46.7% reported using a vape in the last 6 months
  - 0% reported cigarette smoking in the last 6 months.
- Questions were broad and there were no right/wrong answers e.g., “*Do you think cigarette smoking and vaping are the same or different?*”  
“*What do you think happens in your brain and body when you vape?*”



# Key themes



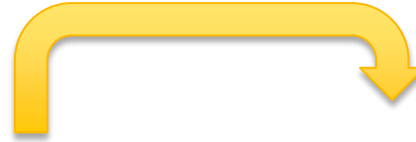
*“... no one's ever told me like what it does to your brain or what it does to your body. It stresses me out, but I do it anyway.... I don't think any of us have ever seen any sort of scientific research about vapes and what it does to you.”*

# Phase 2: Developing the key messages

Step 1: Literature Review Evidence	Step 2: Youth driven needs (YAB consultation, Focus groups)	Step 3: Refine Key messages
<p><b>Prevalence/Risk factors / reasons for uptake</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2017 it was found that 22% of First Nations secondary school students (12-17 years) had tried vaping (15). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are also 35% more likely to be vapers than non-Indigenous young people (17).</li> <li>Some evidence indicates the age of initiation has increased, which is a positive sign (18)</li> <li>Vape flavours are designed and marketed (e.g. as cool, harmless) to be attractive to young people (19).</li> </ul>	<p><i>“I know non-vapers that will sit next to people that are vaping because it smells good.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve known about this maybe since I was year seven because at my school they already had, no vaping signs. And all the older years would vape on the outside of school, so it was surrounded by me a lot.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve heard they also just do it for the flavour because they like the flavour of it. .... It’s more so when I’m talking to my friend, they show me the brand of a certain vape and it, looks cool, and it tastes nice.”</i></p> <p><i>“Every time I get stressed driving to Sydney... just have a vape and I feel great”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vape flavours sound delicious? They’re used on purpose to distract you from the chemicals you’re inhaling</li> <li>Vape companies want young people to vape on purpose, so they have hooked customers for life</li> <li>The earlier you start, the more likely you are to get hooked and stay hooked for longer</li> </ul>



# Developing scripts, factsheets & storyboards

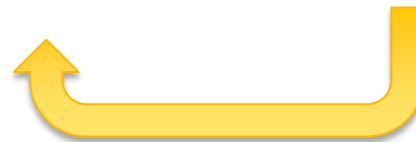
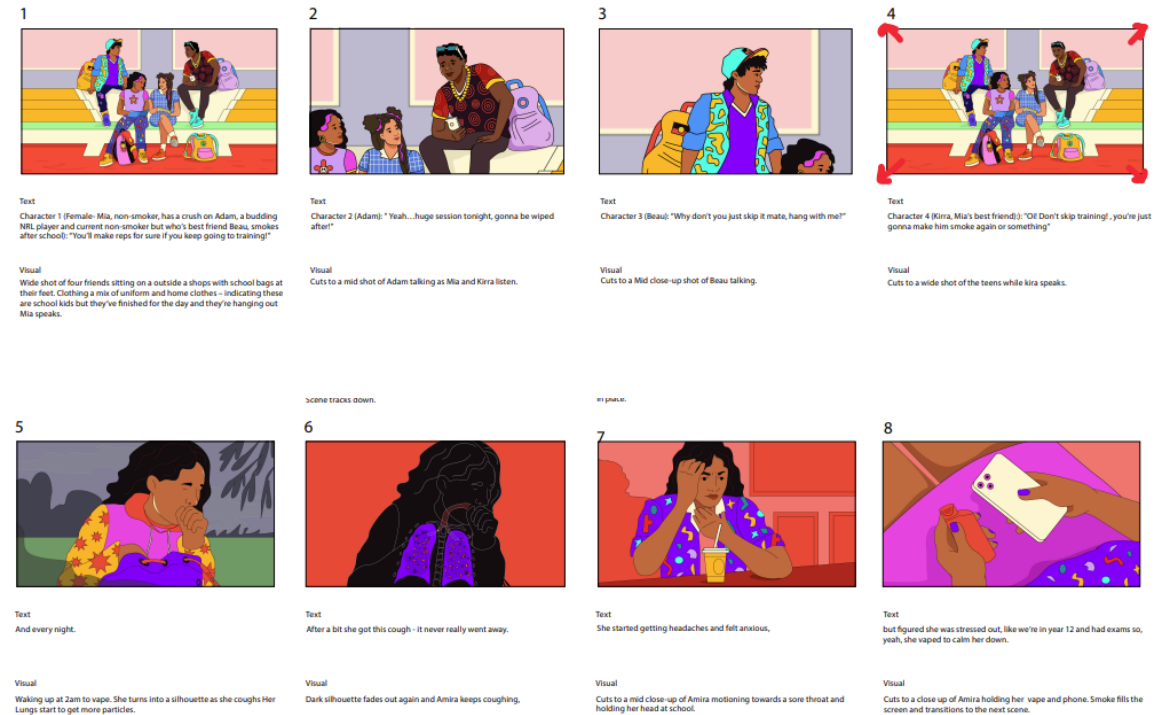


## Screenshots of animation storyboards:

### VAPING ANIMATION – FINAL SCRIPT

- Audience: Aboriginal young people (14-18years).
- Animation length: approx. 60-120 seconds
- Concept: Told by Amira's friend, a male. Recollection of past events, as though telling a story to his friends.
- Animation style: 2D Cartoon style with voice over

Script	Imagery
My friend Amira started vaping at parties. I gave her one.	Animation style – Series of still frames Split screen – Amira and friend on left, close up of lungs on right. Lungs are healthy, clean.
(dialog bubble, unspoken) <i>“If someone sees you vaping, just blow it away, it disappears”</i> I didn't know then that it stuck to your lungs. I didn't know that there could be over 200 chemicals in vapes and all that stuff goes in to your lungs.	Screen 1: Amira tries the vape, and the cloud disappears quickly. Amira and friend smile.  Screen 2: Lungs – particles are seen settling on the tissue
Then she needed it every day. And every night.	Screen 1: Amira searching her bag for the vape. Waking up at 2am to vape (looks at phone which shows the time), looking stressed, tired.  Screen 2: Lungs starting to get more particles.
After a bit she got this cough - it never really went away. She started getting headaches and felt anxious, but figured she was stressed out, like we're in year 12 and had exams so, yeah, she vaped to calm her down. She told me she struggled to breathe some days and figured it was her stress, so she hit it more.	Screen 1: Amira coughing, motioning towards a sore throat and holding her head. Reaching for vape to calm down. Screen 2: As above



# Phase 3: Evaluating the animations

- Resources evaluated online by 136 Aboriginal young people
- Participants responded questions including rating the usefulness, relatability, and importance of the scenarios and health messages
  - Mean age was 17.3 years (SD 0.9); 68.4% male, 30.9% female, 0.7% non-binary.
  - Majority of participants (69.9%) reported vaping an e-cigarette and most reported vaping a few times a week (67.6%).

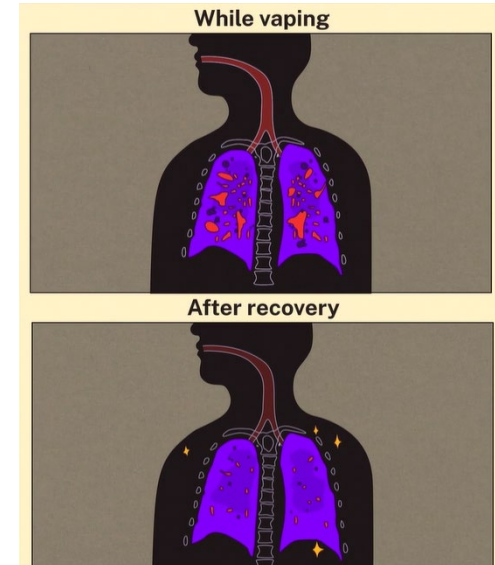


# What did the young people think?

- Most young people said to not change a thing!!
  - *“Nothing it’s a good video that states the right points about vaping”* (Female, Age 14)
- Suggested changes:
  - More information about health effects (e.g., Comparing lungs to a vaper and someone that doesn't vape lungs, mental health effects).
  - Making the messaging more direct
  - Improve music / scene transition

*“I like the animation style and the characters in it”* (Non-binary, Age 15)

*“(the draft animations)... deliver a message that makes you stop and think of the impact of vaping and smoking”* (Male, 16 years)



Available via NSW Health website:

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/aboriginal-young-people-resources.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/aboriginal-young-people-resources.aspx)

### Videos

**How vaping can damage your health** - Watch this short video developed with young Aboriginal people to learn how you can quickly become addicted to vaping and how it can damage your health.

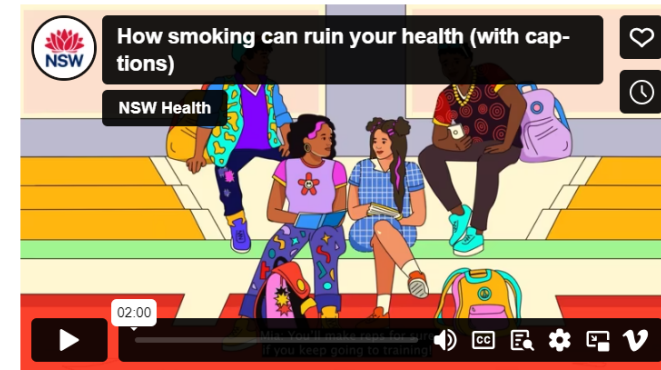


**The facts about vaping**  
(view the [online version](#)).



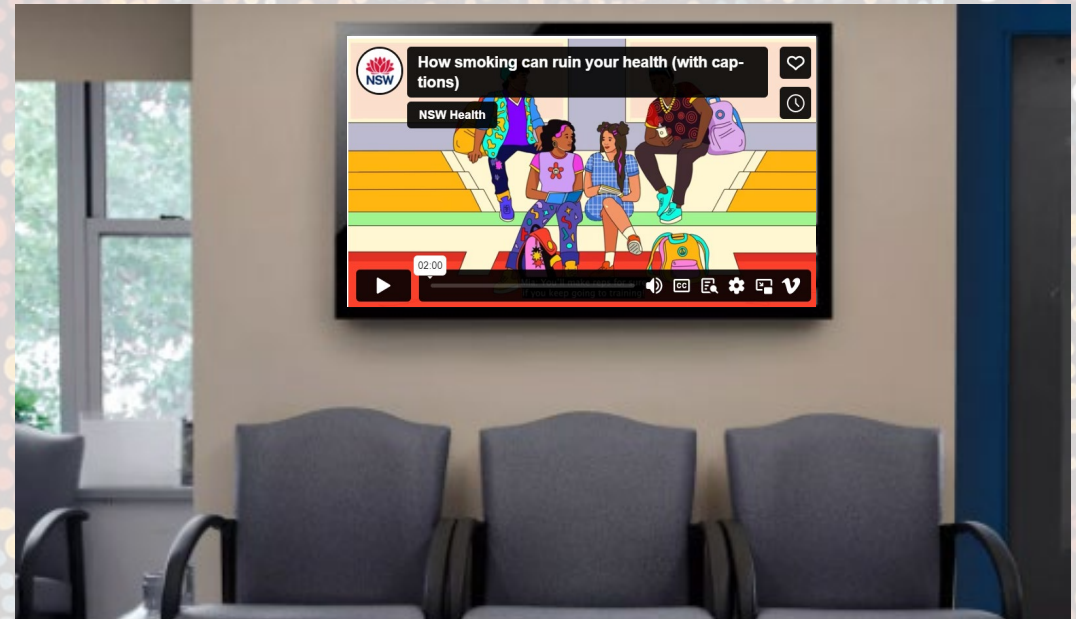
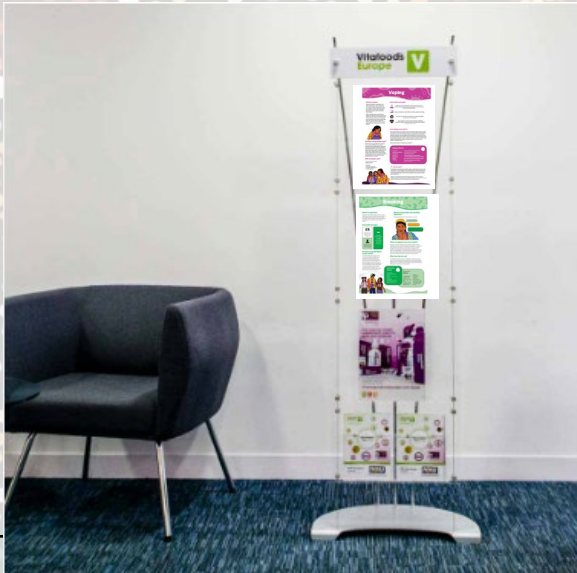
**The facts about smoking**  
(view the [online version](#)).

**How smoking can ruin your health** - Watch this short video developed with young Aboriginal people to encourage young people to break the cycle of smoking.



# Using resources with young people

- Provide **printed handouts** of factsheets in common areas/waiting room
- Create poster with **QR code to videos**
- If a screen is available – have the **videos/fact sheets on rotation**
- **Have available to staff** when working with young people, as conversation starter





# Using resources with young people

## Start a conversation:

1. Make sure you are confident with the facts  
(refer to fact sheet!)

## 2. Find the moment:

- See someone vaping, hear/read about it in news/social media, caught vaping or with vapes/juice, struggling to quit

## 3. Have a conversation:

- Use open ended questions, show interest, let express in their words
- What do you enjoy about vaping? How does it make you feel?
- Create anchor for change/providing help: What do you wish was different? How can I help you when you feel this way?



# Using resources with young people

## 4. Listen with patience

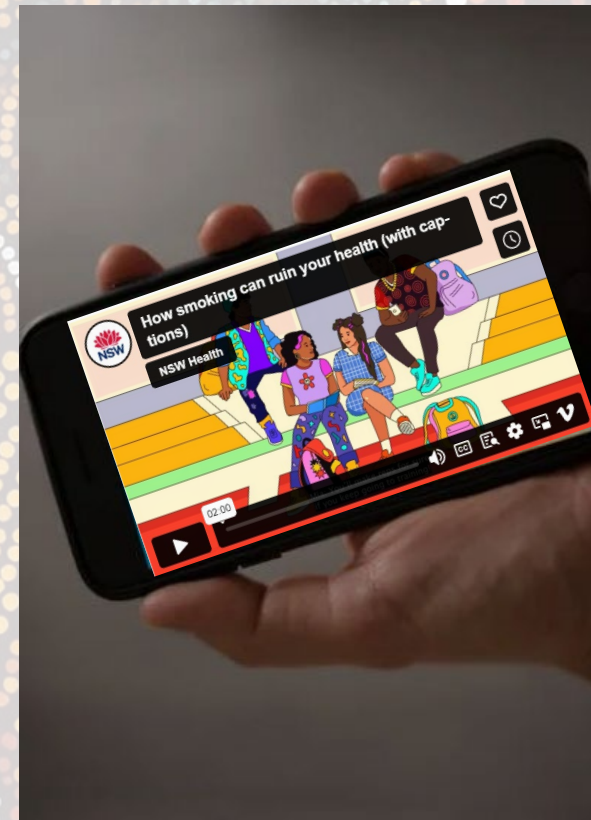
- Let them convey what it means to them, what is important

## 5. Convey expectations

- Why you don't want them to vape, why you are concerned about the risks for their brain, their lungs, their future wellbeing

## 6. Identify alternative strategies and brainstorm, **share resources**

- What do could work for you? Hey have you seen this?
- Find triggers and develop coping strategies, e.g. see someone vaping, handed a vape. **Practice a response** “*No thanks I don't vape*” and **an action**, e.g. cold water + breath mint
- Self reflect on vaping patters > change routines where vaping is associated > fill with other behaviour, e.g. podcast, exercise, chatting with a friend

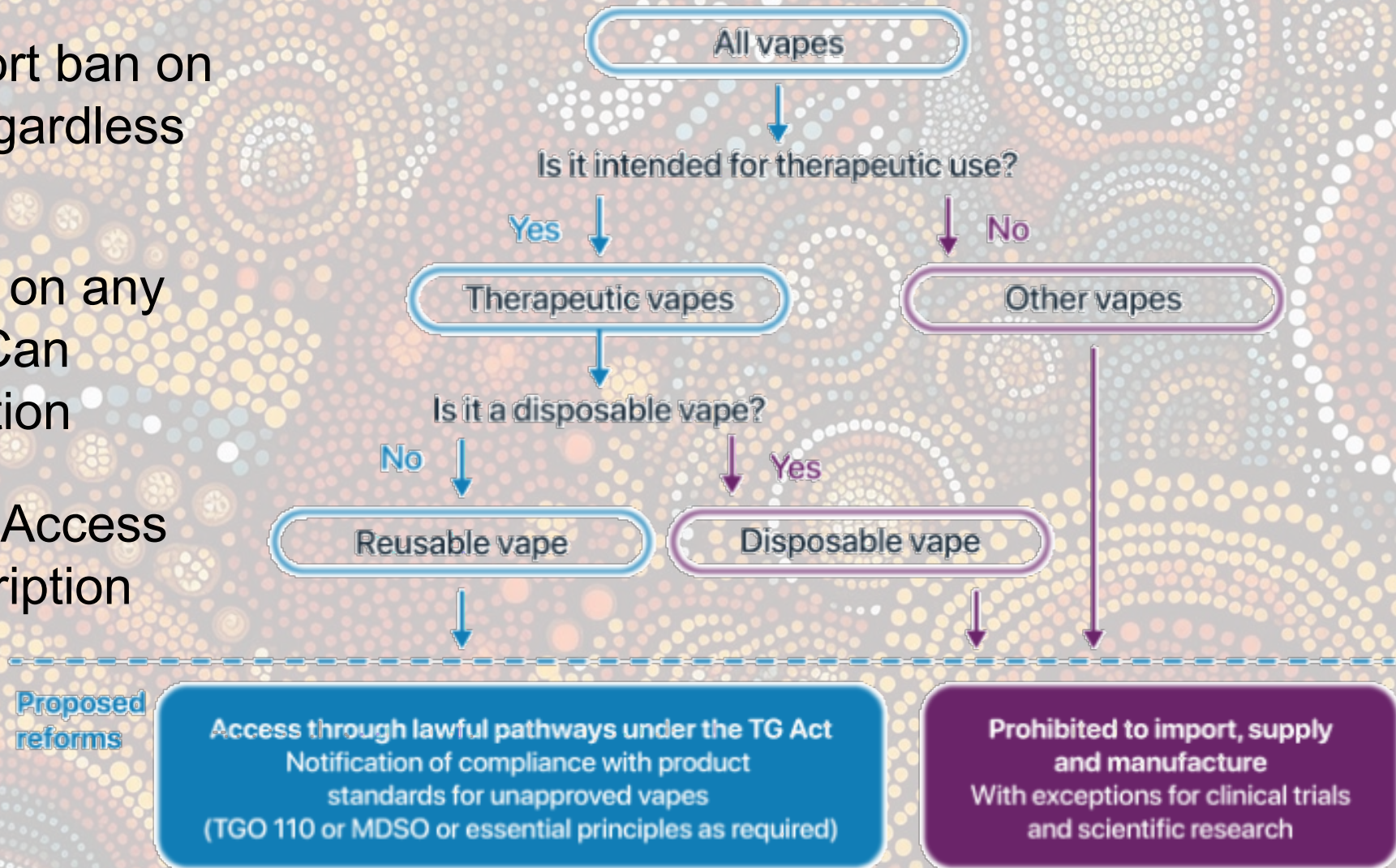


# Understanding new regulations

**From 1 Jan 2024:** import ban on all disposable vapes regardless of nicotine content

**From 1 July 2024:** ban on any non-therapeutic vape. Can access via GP prescription

**From 1 October 2024:** Access via pharmacy, no prescription needed for 18+













# Can young people still access vapes?

- Access via convenience stores will likely slow
- Supply may shift more online (Facebook marketplace: “fruit”)
- Pharmacy supply may lead to on-selling to minors
- Dark net, illicit supply, risk of contamination with other drugs



**The Guardian**  
**Cannabis vapes in Australia containing opioids spark calls for better access to anti-overdose drugs**  
Vaping synthetic opioids can cause overdose or unconsciousness within minutes and from just six puffs, Victorian medical expert says

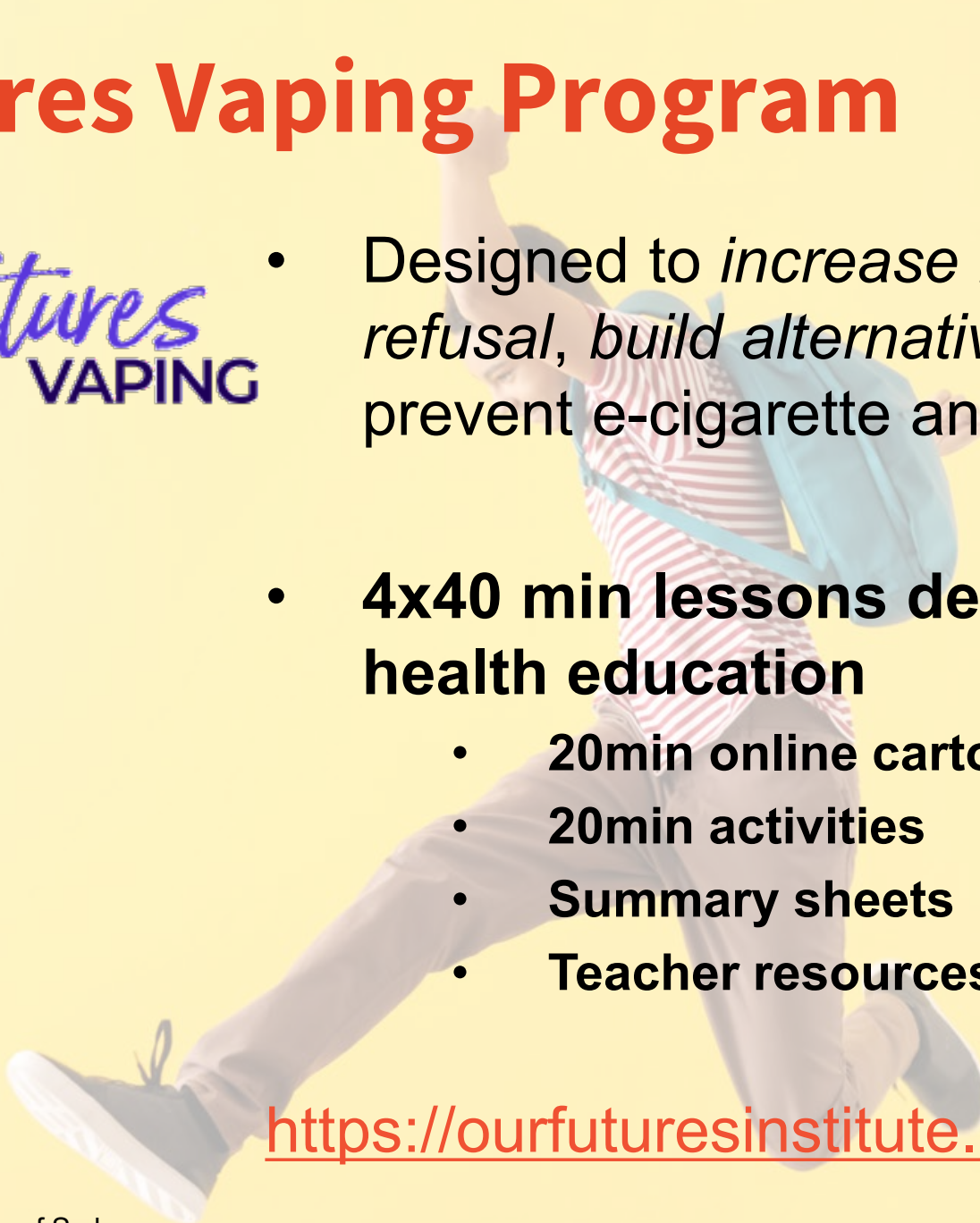
The Matilda Centre, University of Sydney

 A\$35 Fruit Sydney, NSW	 A\$33 A\$38 Fruit Sydney, NSW	 cheapest fruit BAR you can GET on the market A\$30 A\$45 Fruit Sydney, NSW	 A\$5 A\$10 Box of fruit 🍌 🍌 🍌 Sydney, NSW	 cheapest fruit BAR you can GET on the market A\$40 Fruit Sydney, NSW
 A\$35 Fruity fruit Sydney, NSW	 Iget Bar 3500 Pick up Liverpool or delivery door to door available 10-\$320 20-\$600 30-\$860 40-\$1,060 A\$25 Juicy fruit iget platter Sydney, NSW	 cheapest fruit you can GET on the market A\$10 fruits Sydney, NSW	 Free Fruit & Vegies For Sale Sydney, NSW	 A\$28 Fruit platter ice Sydney, NSW

# OurFutures Vaping Program



- Designed to *increase resistance skills, assertive refusal, build alternative coping strategies* to prevent e-cigarette and smoking uptake
- **4x40 min lessons delivered during Year 7/8 health education**
  - 20min online cartoon
  - 20min activities
  - Summary sheets
  - Teacher resources



<https://ourfuturesinstitute.org.au/>

# OurFutures Vaping Program



A two-arm cluster RCT among Year 7/8 students in 40 schools across NSW, WA and QLD

40 schools  
5,166 students

Active control group  
(health education as usual)  
20 schools

OurFutures Vaping Program  
20 schools





**STRONG  
& DEADLY  
FUTURES**



- A strengths-based, culturally-inclusive, alcohol and drug prevention program for high school students
- Co-developed from 2018-19 in partnership with an Indigenous creative agency, ACCHOs and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and staff at 4 schools
- In 2021-22, broader consultations held in 23 locations with Aboriginal community members and youth
- Being trialled in 23 schools in QLD, NSW & WA in 2022-24
- Contact - A/Prof Lexine Stapinski [lexine.stapinski@sydney.edu.au](mailto:lexine.stapinski@sydney.edu.au)

Collaborators:



# Acknowledgements

**Thank you to all the young people who were part of this project!**

**We also would like to acknowledge and thank:**

1. The Aboriginal Reference Group
2. The Matilda Centre Research Team
3. The Matilda Centre Youth Advisory Board
4. Many collaborators (incl: Djurali Centre, Barang Regional Alliance)
5. NSW Ministry of Health for funding the project





# Thank you!

## Emily Stockings

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<https://www.sydney.edu.au/matilda-centre/>



Faculty of Medicine and Health

**Central Sydney (Patyegarang) Precinct**

*Pronounced: pa-te-ga-rang*

Patyegarang was a young Gamaraigal woman who gifted the language of her people to early European settlers.



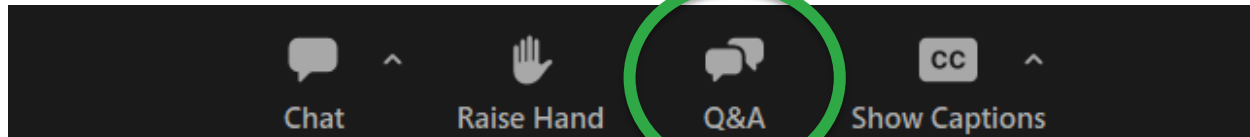
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# Questions?





# Thank You

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