

NEWS RELEASE

ACATA DISAGREES WITH VAPE DISPLAY BAN

High risks of a surge in smoking prevalence

KUALA LUMPUR, 10 October 2024 – The Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA) disagrees with the vape display ban and urges the Ministry of Health (MoH) to reconsider the measure.

According to ACATA, the retail display ban, which will come into effect on 1 April 2025, will hinder adult smokers' access to less harmful alternatives and perpetuate misinformation by equating vaping with smoking. By treating vape and smoking as equivalent, the ban risks sending the wrong message to the public and further demonises vape, a tool that has been proven effective in helping smokers quit.

ACATA further warns that the ban could lead to a surge in smoking rates, as it creates unnecessary barriers for smokers seeking less harmful alternatives.

Dr Arifin Fii, President of the Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy said, "Vape products are widely recognised as an effective harm reduction tool, offering smokers a less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes. The display ban will create unnecessary barriers for smokers who are trying to transition to less harmful alternatives, pushing them back towards smoking or the black market. Moreover, this approach overlooks the importance of responsible, educational displays that could help guide smokers towards informed decisions."

This move could lead to a reversal in the years of progress made in reducing smoking rates in Malaysia. We are now at risk of experiencing an increase in smoking rates if the display ban is enforced. We cannot afford to let this happen. The government must take a proactive approach by ensuring smokers have easy access to less harmful alternatives like vaping."

ACATA underscores that the focus of any regulation should be on harm reduction and encouraging smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives, rather than enforcing blanket restrictions that create confusion and stigmatise products intended to help.

"Smokers need clear, visible, and responsible access to vaping as an alternative. The display of vape products should be done in a controlled manner, in a way that educates adult smokers but keeps them out of reach from non-smokers or the youth."

"We urge the MoH to drop the display ban for vape products and maintain it only for traditional tobacco. Vape products, when displayed responsibly, offer a lifeline to smokers looking to quit. By keeping them out of sight, the government risks exacerbating smoking rates and undermining public health goals," **Dr. Arifin** concluded.

ACATA

Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy

About Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy

Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy or ACATA is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working to reduce addiction-related harms for Malaysians. It is promoting evidence-based public health policies with human rights-based approaches, through research and analysis. Helmed by medical professionals, ACATA strives to increase local studies on addiction and the implementation of progressive science-based regulatory frameworks through advocacy, public awareness, education, and research dissemination.

For more information, visit <http://acata.com.my/index.html>