

## ***News Release***

### **Experts Panel Caution Against Drastic Vape Regulations**

**Kuala Lumpur, 20 June 2024** – An expert panel, which convened to discuss the impending implementation of the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852) today, unanimously called for sensible vape regulations and caution against drastic vape regulations that could impact economy, retail sector, consumers and public health.

The panel comprised Pankaj Kumar, Managing Director of Datametrics Research and Information Centre (DARE); Dr Arifin Fii, President of Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA); and Tarmizi Anuwar, Country Associate at the Consumer Choice Center (CCC).

For years, the vape industry and consumers in Malaysia have operated without clear guidelines, creating a need for sensible and structured regulations.

The panel underscored the importance of the upcoming Act 852 in providing much-needed oversight, while cautioning against overly drastic measures that could impact the economy, retail sector, consumers and public health.

**Pankaj Kumar, Managing Director of DARE** emphasized the economic implications of drastic regulations: "Drastic regulations, such as a banning display of vape products at point of sale that has been in discussions recently, can lead to creating a whole new market for non-compliant and illegal products, undermining both consumer safety and government revenue. The vape industry, currently valued at RM3.48 billion, contributes to the economy by creating jobs and facilitates growth of the retail sector. Drastic measures can stifle this growth and lead to job losses."

"Implementing and enforcing drastic measures can also be costly for the retailers. Hefty costs and investments would need to be made to adjust to the ban of display of vape products and these resources could be better spent on facilitating growth of businesses especially in current economic situation. A sensible and balanced regulatory framework is essential to ensure the vape legal market that can be properly monitored and enforced."

**Dr Arifin Fii, President of ACATA** highlighted the public health perspective, advocating for harm reduction education. "Education on harm reduction is crucial. Informing adult smokers about the relative benefits of switching to vape products can significantly reduce smoking prevalence. Prohibitive measures, such as display bans, can be counter-productive and hinder access to less harmful alternatives. It sends the wrong message smokers and cause smokers to be misinformed about switching to less harmful products. **Instead, educational, informative, responsible and regulated display targeted at smokers and potential quitters should be allowed**"

**Tarmizi Anuwar, Country Associate at CCC** stressed the need for consumer protection and informed choice. "Adult consumers must be well-informed about their options. Regulations such as banning display of vape products at point of sale can limit the information available to consumers, hindering their ability to make informed choices. Restrictive measures can also

drive consumers to illegal products, where the products are not compliant with any safety standards set and contains unknown and unregulated substances.”

All experts agreed on the need for greater collaboration and recommended that the Ministry of Health engage with all stakeholders, including retailers, industry representatives, public health experts, and consumer advocacy groups. This collaborative approach would ensure that the regulations are well-rounded, effective, and in the best interests of all parties.

The panel concluded that while regulations are necessary, it must strike a balance that does not hamper the potential benefits and economic contributions of the vape industry.

**About Datametrics Research and Information Sdn Bhd**

*Datametrics Research and Information Sdn Bhd (DARE) is a Malaysian-based Think Tank or Policy Institute committed to performing research and advocacy for key sectors that are critical to the Malaysian economy.*

*Established in 2021, DARE endeavours to undertake research, analysis and policy recommendations that are independent, bold, impactful and actionable. The team comprises experts from diverse backgrounds, all with a common purpose of advocating the improvement of public policy for sustainable nation-building. For more information on DARE please visit [www.daresearch.com.my](http://www.daresearch.com.my)*

**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>*

**About Consumer Choice Center**

*The CCC represents consumer in over 100 countries across the globe. We closely monitor regulatory trends in Ottawa, Washington, Brussels, Geneva, and other hotspots of regulation and inform and activate consumers to fight for #ConsumerChoice.*

*Learn more at [consumerchoicecenter.org](http://consumerchoicecenter.org).*