



**Global Forum  
on Nicotine**

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# Vapers' knowledge: a lay epidemiology

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Based on: Trish Fraser<sup>1</sup>, Marewa Glover<sup>2,3</sup> & Penny Truman.<sup>2</sup> Vapers' perspectives on government and public health responses to vaping nicotine in New Zealand. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 2018, 15:13.

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# Vaping in NZ

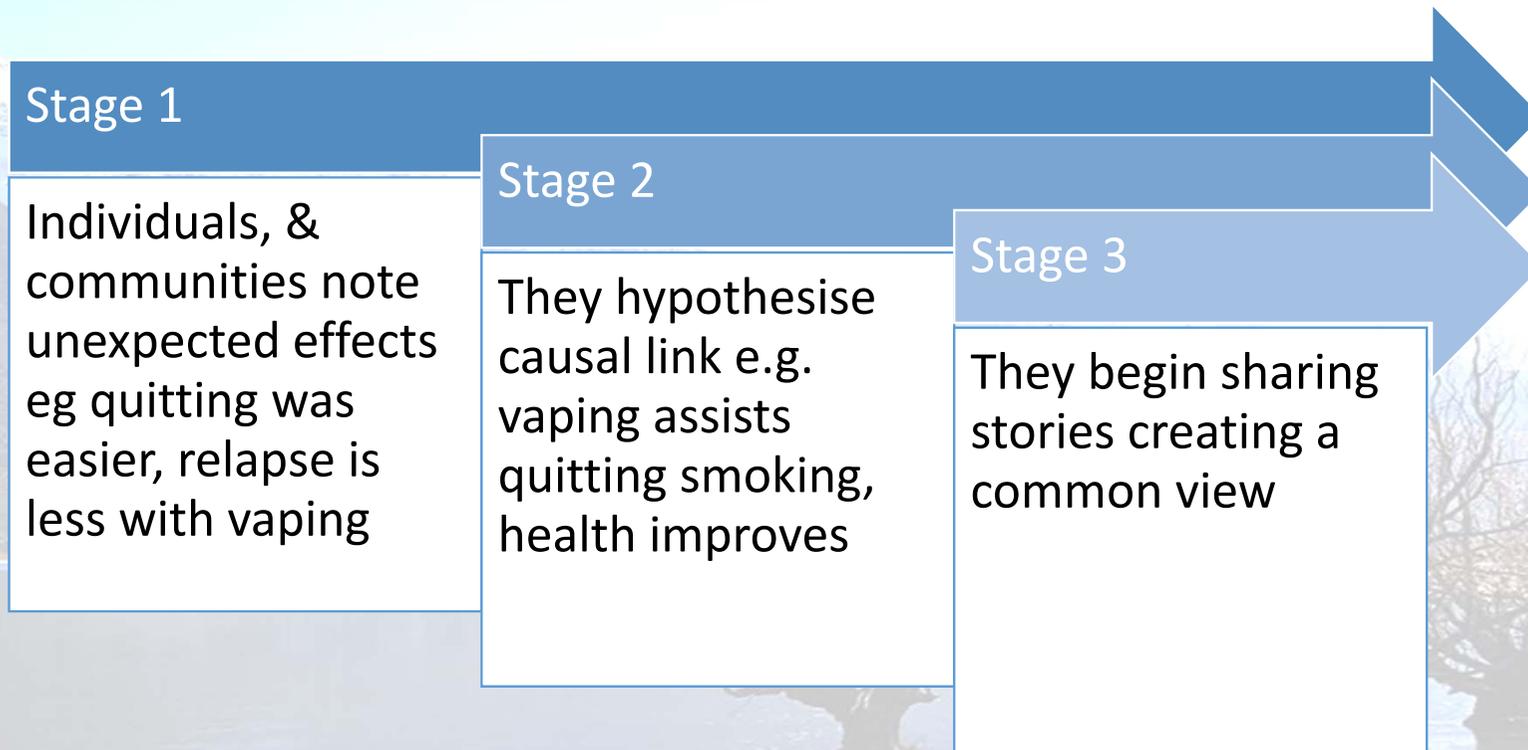
- Initially, Ministry of Health claimed:
  - Nicotine e-liquid was banned under Smoke-free Environments Act (1990) clause prohibiting the import, sale & distribution, & advertising, of “oral” tobacco products
  - Import for personal use was deemed legal
- Tobacco control polarised
  - Majority of sector said to be against, but a few key people were for vaping
- ‘Black market’ in nicotine e-liquid grew

# This led to Barriers to Switching

- Lack of convenient access
  - to quality information on what to buy & where
  - to nicotine e-liquid
- Lack of support to switch
  - stigma, glares & misinformation about risks
  - health professionals refused to support / advised against vaping
  - scare-mongering about ecigs / vaping in the media
  - threats to ban all vaping products

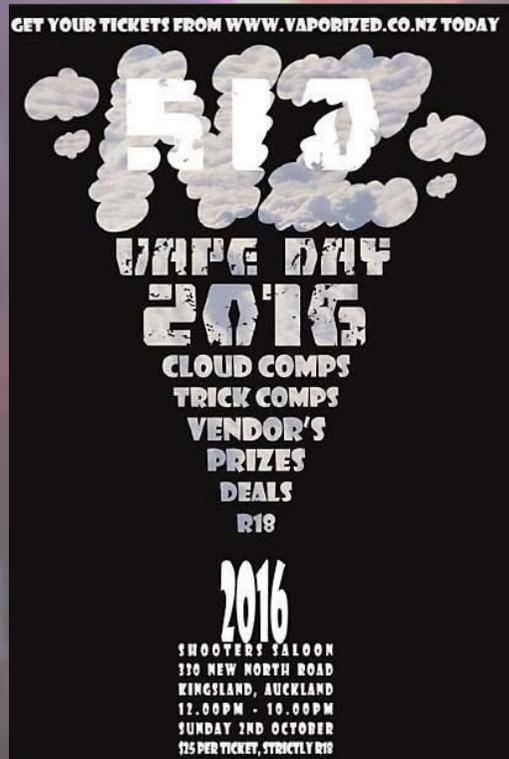
FRASER, T., GLOVER, M., TRUMAN, P. Vapers' perspectives on government and public health responses to vaping nicotine in New Zealand. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 2018, 15:13. pp:10.

# Stages through which vapers' knowledge developed as a lay epidemiology



Brown P. When the public knows better: Popular epidemiology challenges the system. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*. 1993;35(8):16-41.

# #vapefam



- Large online local & international community:
  - Youtube instructional videos, reviews
  - Facebook groups
  - Twitter
- Local meetups
- Regional/National Vape Days & Expos

Photo:  
CHCH Vape Day '16

# Brown's\* lay epidemiology stages cont.

## Stage 4

Now a more cohesive group they read, ask around, gather anecdotal 'evidence' & begin talking to government officials & scientific experts about the benefits of vaping

## Stage 5

If they are dismissed and ignored, typically this fuels the establishment of advocacy groups and alliances to pursue their investigations

## Stage 6

Govt funds studies in response to community groups' pressure. But, these usually find no association e.g. between vaping & effectiveness of quitting.

When public health / tobacco control moved to stop the spread of vaping, vapers formed lobby groups – a new social justice movement grew.

Vapers became:

- Manufacturers
- Retailers
- Advocates
- Peer 'Cessation' volunteers
- Lobbyists (writing submissions & letters to MPs)



# Brown's\* lay epidemiology stages cont.

## Stage 7

Independent researchers are attracted to conduct studies, or vaping community engages their own researchers

## Stage 8

The building evidence is then used to confront opposition and if necessary pursue litigation

## Stage 9

The affected community & their advocacy groups press for corroboration of their findings & official recognition by Govt & experts

# NZ to Legalise Vaping

**Evidence for vaping increased**

**Pressure to legalise increased**

**Slowly more nurses, doctors & public health people shifted**

**Govt announced plans to legalise & regulate vaping**

# Vaping, iQos & Swedish Snus legal

**& then... in March 2018**

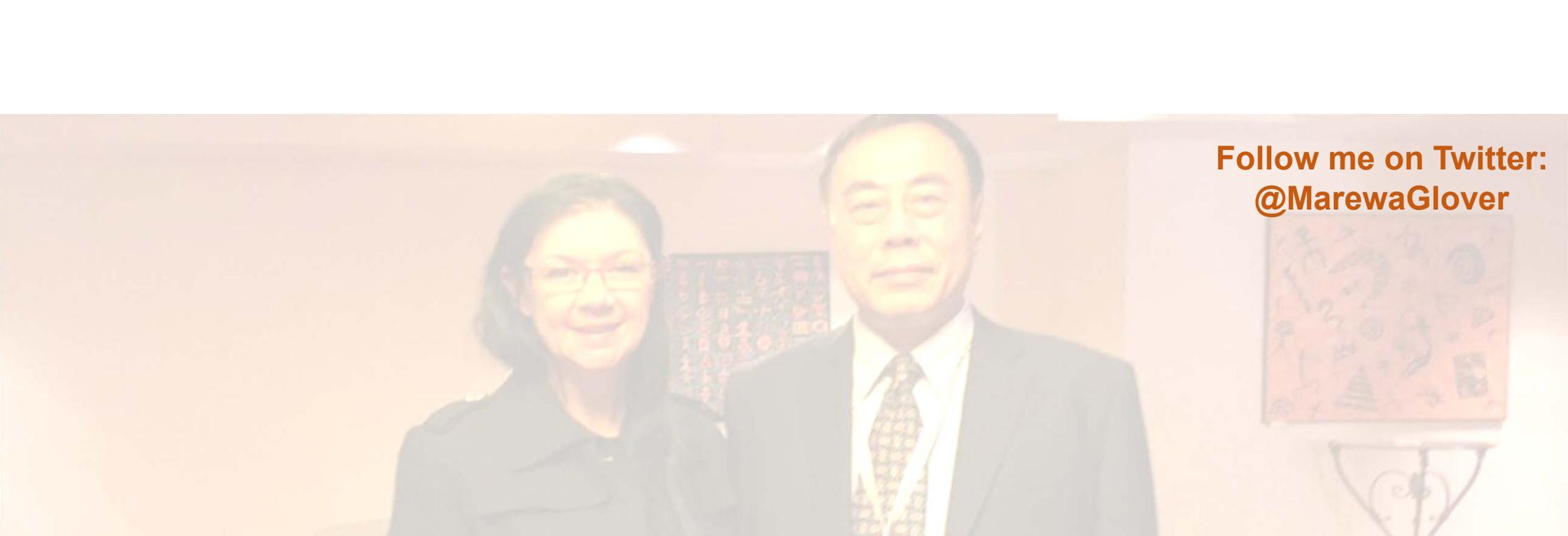
Ministry of Health lost court case against Philip Morris *HEETS*

The Judge ruled that:

- HEETs were a “tobacco product” not an “oral product” “for chewing”
- banning a reduced harm product goes *AGAINST* the Smoke-free Environments Act which was intended to reduce harm!!

**Implications:**

- Tobacco products that are not oral for chewing (e.g. nicotine e-liquid & Swedish Snus) are not, and actually were never, banned!



Follow me on Twitter:  
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## **Disclosures**

I have never received funding from any tobacco or vaping product company. I have, in the distant past (over 10yrs+), received fees from pharmaceutical companies for consultancy re cessation medicines.

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