

CAPHRA Criticises Philippine Government's Inconsistent Vaping Policies, Calls for Evidence-Based Approach

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MANILA, PHILIPPINES, April 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates (CAPHRA) today criticised the Philippine government for its contradictory stance on vaping, highlighting inconsistencies between public crackdowns on illicit vape products, growing fiscal dependence on vape taxes, and questionable environmental practices surrounding the disposal of confiscated devices.

"The Department of Health's punitive approach to vaping stands in stark contrast to the government's increasing reliance on vape taxes to offset declining cigarette revenues," said Nancy Loucas, Executive Coordinator of CAPHRA. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has openly stated that vape tax collections are crucial to meeting this year's excise targets, particularly as cigarette tax revenues decline due to reduced smoking rates and rising illicit trade.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) recently destroyed nearly three million smuggled vape products, valued at over PHP 3.2 billion, during a high-profile ceremony led by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. While intended to combat illicit trade, Loucas criticised the destruction, saying, "Destroying vapes without exploring recycling or upcycling options is environmentally irresponsible and disregards best practices successfully adopted by other countries. This is political theatre at the expense of sustainability."



CAPHRA
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TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION ADVOCATES

The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates

Loucas also pointed to mixed messaging in public health communication. While Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa champions strict vaping regulations, the government's fiscal dependence on vape tax revenues sends conflicting signals to both consumers and industry. "Vilifying vaping while depending on its income undermines the integrity of both public health initiatives and fiscal policy," she said.

CAPHRA's research, encompassing over 700 participants, indicates that the majority of ex-smokers credit vaping with their success in quitting cigarettes. However, many remain confused and frustrated by the government's contradictory approach. "The public demands regulated access to reduced-risk products and expects policies based on scientific evidence, not political expediency," Loucas added.

Supporting the call for a more balanced approach, harm reduction advocate Justin Tumang stated, "We must move beyond scare tactics and focus on practical solutions that genuinely help people transition away from smoking. Harm reduction is about providing safer alternatives, not punishing those seeking better health outcomes."

Clarisse Yvette P. Virgino, CAPHRA's Philippine representative, reinforced the importance of sensible regulation. "As someone who successfully switched from smoking to vaping, I believe in regulation that protects consumers without being so prohibitive that it risks pushing people back to cigarettes or the black market. I remain hopeful that the Philippines will maintain adult access to safer alternatives while ensuring safety and compliance."

CAPHRA urges Philippine authorities to create a coherent policy framework that recognises vaping's role in tobacco harm reduction, ensures environmentally responsible disposal of confiscated products, and actively consults independent scientific experts.

"Health policy must evolve beyond political posturing. CAPHRA stands ready to work collaboratively with the government to develop solutions that prioritise public health and environmental stewardship," Loucas concluded.

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