



Wednesday 17 July 2019

### **LIQUID NICOTINE RISK AWARENESS NEEDED**

The death of an 18-month-old child following ingestion of liquid nicotine has prompted Victorian Coroner Phillip Byrne to call for greater public awareness of the dangers of the vaping substance.

Baby J, whose name has been withheld to protect his family's identity, accidentally consumed the substance his mother had been mixing with vape juice for an e-cigarette, in the early evening of 30 May 2018.

Baby J's mother found him with an open bottle of the highly toxic liquid in his mouth, after she had inadvertently turned her attention from the child to put some bottles of vape juice away.

She immediately washed Baby J's mouth out and called emergency services, however he died at the Royal Children's Hospital on 10 June 2018.

Coroner Byrne said that although Baby J had not been adequately supervised whilst in the presence of the liquid nicotine, the case presented a momentary lapse in vigilance rather than neglect.

With the aim of improving public health and safety and preventing like deaths, the coronial investigation focused on access to liquid nicotine and public awareness of its potential dangers.

Current laws mean the sale, possession and use of liquid nicotine are illegal in Australia, however consumers are still able to access the product through overseas online retailers.

His Honour sought submissions from Safer Care Victoria, the Victorian Forensic Paediatric Medical Service and the Commission for Children and Young People. The Chairman of the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association and Quit Victoria also made submissions regarding liquid nicotine for His Honour's consideration.

His Honour determined that although legalisation of liquid nicotine may enable the regulation of content and safety packaging, the issue was complex and he was not prepared to make any recommendations to alter the current legislation.

In the finding, Coroner Byrne acknowledged the current work of Safer Care Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in educating the Victorian community about the risks associated with e-cigarettes.

His Honour has recommended that DHHS also conduct a public awareness campaign about liquid nicotine.

A copy of the finding can be found at:

[https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Baby%20J\\_277318.pdf](https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-07/Baby%20J_277318.pdf)

PLEASE NOTE: a suppression order is in place prohibiting the publication of the name or image of the deceased or his parents, or any information that would identify or tend to identify them. Details of the suppression order are included in the comments in the finding.