



VICTORIA POLICE

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee – Inquiry into Vaping and Tobacco Controls

Response to a question taken on notice on 29 April 2024 public hearing – Attendance by Assistance Commissioner Martin O’Brien, Crime Command, Victoria Police

**Question on Notice (as per transcript):**

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Just a final one – a bit of a different area. Chemical contaminants have been found in either tobacco or vapes. What are some of the substances – and are they themselves illegal substances – that have been found in them?

**Martin O’BRIEN:** I would have to take that on notice. I cannot tell you the breakdown of the chemical compounds that have gone through, because we do not actually analyse those. Our forensic sciences department do not do the analysis of that; that goes back to the TGA. I can say – and it lends probably into another topic, which is the storage, handling and disposal – what is involved in actually disposing of a vape product is incredibly difficult and complex and very costly.

**Answer:** Victoria Police do not undertake analysis in relation to the chemical composition of tobacco or vapes.

In relation to vapes, we advise that vapes are tested by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), who test for the presence and quality of nicotine in addition to various other chemicals. Victoria Police do not test vapes in any way, and confirm that all seized vapes are referred to the TGA for testing.

When Victoria Police seize plant material suspected of being illicit tobacco, it is forensically examined by the Botany Unit within Victoria Police’s Forensic Services Department. The plant material may include whole plants, dried whole leaves, loose dried shredded leaf (‘chop-chop’), commercially packaged cigarettes, commercially packaged shisha (molasses) tobacco, and non-commercially packaged cigarettes.

The Botany Unit can identify any of the above forms of suspected tobacco product based on the morphological features of the plant/plant material. The Botany Unit do not rely on any chemical testing to identify any suspected tobacco exhibits, as Victoria Police typically only need to establish whether a plant/plant material is tobacco or not.