
Guide to Auditing No Smoking or Vaping Signage

June 2025

Supporting smoke and vape-free environments with the No Smoking or Vaping Signage Tool



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Acknowledgement of Country

Western Public Health Unit acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across which our work takes place, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung, Boon Wurrung and Bunurong, and Wadawurrung peoples of the greater Kulin Nation. We pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to the healing of country, working towards equity in health outcomes, and the ongoing journey of reconciliation. Western Public Health Unit is committed to respectfully listening and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and wholeheartedly supports their journey towards self-determination.



**Delgaia (Wemba Wemba) means to be good and well.
Artist: Annette Joy**

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Maribyrnong City Council for collaborating with the Western Public Health Unit on the pilot project, and their efforts to reduce vaping and tobacco harm and support health and wellbeing for their community. The data collected as part of WPHU's Pilot Project enabled the Environmental Health team at the City of Maribyrnong to discuss potential levers and opportunities with various council teams such as sport and recreation and strategic planning teams.

Western Public Health Unit (WPHU) is seeking to promote smoke and vape-free environments by increasing the display of 'no smoking or vaping' signage across the catchment.

WPHU have developed a bespoke No Smoking or Vaping Signage Tool and this accompanying guide to assist stakeholders with auditing no smoking or vaping signs.

Clearly signed smoke and vape-free locations and places is one public health action that can support the Western Public Health Unit Vaping and Tobacco Action Group (V-TAG) catchment partners to reduce vaping and tobacco-related harm across the WPHU catchment.

What is the purpose of the No Smoking or Vaping Signage Tool?

Western Public Health Unit (WPHU) is seeking to promote smoke and vape-free environments, by increasing the display of 'no smoking or vaping' signage across the catchment.

To enable this, WPHU has developed the No Smoking or Vaping Signage Tool (Signage Tool). The Signage Tool was designed to align with smoke-free requirements in the Victorian *Tobacco Act 1987* (Tobacco Act), and enable local stakeholders and organisations to understand current no smoking/vaping signage in a chosen setting, by:

- a. describing the current type and quantity of no smoking/vaping signage (no smoking, no vaping, or no smoking or vaping)



- b. identifying areas where additional 'no smoking or vaping' signage could be displayed
- c. identifying where a sign is damaged or in need of repair and requires updating.

This local audit action will support a transition towards increasing 'no smoking or vaping' signage across the WPHU catchment.

If you would like to view a demonstration version of the Signage Tool, please click [here](#), or scan the QR code to the right. Please note this tool is for demonstration purposes only. Data entered into this version will not be saved.



Who can use the Signage Tool, and which settings can be audited?

The Signage Tool has been developed to be used in various settings and by different organisations in Victoria working to reduce vaping and tobacco related harm – including, but not limited to, LPHUs, local councils, community health organisations, and recreational settings.

Audits can be undertaken by various individuals e.g. health promotion officers, social planners, or environmental health officers (EHOs), as well as students undertaking placement in a relevant health or community-focused field.

Non-legislated areas are places or settings where smoking and vaping is not legally prohibited. Local policies or voluntary bans, for example, by local councils, might still apply in some settings.

Legislated areas are places or settings where smoking and vaping is prohibited by law. Some examples include enclosed workplaces and schools.

The Signage Tool can be used to audit signage in legislated and non-legislated areas.

Why audit no smoking and/or vaping signage?

Vaping has emerged as a significant public health challenge. In Victoria, the Tobacco Act legislates a range of settings as smoke-free. Where smoking is prohibited, vaping is also prohibited. Smoke-free (and vape-free) laws and policies play an important role in reducing the health harms and risks associated with smoking and vaping by reducing exposure to second-hand smoke and aerosols and decreasing social acceptability of smoking and vaping.

In recognising the importance of communicating that *no smoking* also means *no vaping*, the Victorian Department of Health has created 'no smoking or vaping' signage. However, the new 'no smoking or vaping' signage is not mandatory under the Tobacco Act, and consequently, many settings are yet to adopt the new signage. For more information, visit:

[Resources and factsheets - tobacco reform | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/tobacco-reform)

[Smoke-free and vape-free areas \(health.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/smoke-free-and-vape-free-areas)

**NO
SMOKING
OR VAPING**



PENALTIES MAY APPLY
Tobacco Act 1987

Why collect this data?

Depending on your organisational readiness and capacity, your role and your organisation's smoke and vape-free efforts (including smoke and vape-free policy development, activities, and cessation support for staff), the data may be used to support:

- immediate action to update signage from 'no smoking' to 'no smoking or vaping' in the identified locations
- development of future action plans to increase 'no smoking or vaping' signage
- organisational commitment to reduce smoking and vaping related harms
- the EHO workforce in creating smoke-free and vape-free environments
- planning and implementation of health promotion strategies and initiatives.

This guide is based on the experience from a pilot project where we audited signage across council owned or managed sport and recreation settings in the [City of Maribyrnong](#) in May 2024.

Where can your organisation get new signage from?

The Victorian Department of Health offers free PDF copies of the 'No Smoking or Vaping' signage to print and display for all venues and smoke-free settings. More information can be found here: [Resources and factsheets - tobacco reform | health.vic.gov.au](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/tobacco-reform)

Step by step guide

Step 1: Planning

1.1 Project initiation

The project can be initiated in various ways to suit the context and opportunities available. For example, it might emerge as an opportunistic piece of work, using the audit data as a catalyst for action. This could involve leveraging workforce capacity, such as student or research placements, to drive progress.

Alternatively, the project may be launched by fostering collaboration across different areas within your organisation that are working towards reducing vaping and tobacco-related harm. For example, health promotion and planning, environmental health, sport and recreation, building and maintenance, and youth services. This flexible approach allows the project to align with existing resources, expertise, and priorities.

If working in a council setting, you may consider engaging with environmental health officers (EHOs) in the planning of your project, as the findings may have direct relevance for their work. EHOs are authorised under the Tobacco Act to investigate tobacco related complaints, assess compliance with tobacco retail sale, tobacco display, and address smoke-free signage requirements within their municipality.

1.2 Decide on your setting and scope

This could be a particular setting within a local government area or local public health unit catchment, that is smoke-free as per the Tobacco Act or as per local laws.

Consider prioritising settings that are frequented by priority populations such as children, young people and families or areas with high-foot traffic, as well as the 'boots on the ground' capacity you have available for the audit.

Boosting 'boots on the ground' capacity

University student placements are a great way to increase capacity and provide valuable work experience.

As an example, WPHU audited 28 sport and recreation settings in the City of Maribyrnong, which took one person approximately 3 full workdays.

1.3 Determine your project aim

The Signage Tool allows you to:

- describe the quantity and type of signage currently displayed (no smoking, no vaping, or no smoking or vaping)
- identify areas where additional 'no smoking or vaping' signage could be displayed
- identify where a sign is damaged or in need of repair and requires updating.

1.4 Inform WPHU of your planned audit, including timelines

If you would like to use the Signage Tool, please contact WPHU at wphu@wh.org.au. We will provide you with access to the Signage Tool, and the accompanying Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). (Please note up until now you will only have access to the Demonstration Tool).

Once you have completed data collection, WPHU can analyse the data and generate a report. This report will be provided in PDF format. You may share this report within your organisation to help identify areas where signage may need to be added or updated. **This is the only report that includes your organisation's name, and it will be shared only with your organisation.**

By using the Signage Tool, you consent to WPHU using the data to measure our collective impact approach including comparing geographically deidentified data from multiple participants. All data will be stored on secure, password protected Western Health servers.

1.5 Plan your data collection

- Determine which setting/s are in scope of the project.
- Based on your chosen scope, review the relevant smoke-free requirements in the Tobacco Act – pay close attention to whether there is a legal requirement for ‘no smoking’ signage to be displayed, or if you want to display ‘no smoking or vaping’ signage in smoke-free areas in line with best practice (see further information below).
- If relevant, review any relevant smoke-free policy the organisation or setting may have.
- Familiarise yourself with the Signage Tool.
- Develop a plan to visit each site in consultation with the relevant organisations. This may include determining which sites are in close proximity and can be audited on the same day.

For information on smoke-free and vape-free areas, visit: [Smoke-free and vape-free areas \(health.vic.gov.au\)](http://health.vic.gov.au)

Setting	Smoking and vaping is banned:	Signage requirements	Further information
Primary and secondary schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within the grounds - within four metres of any public entrance 	A sign must be displayed at an entrance	Smoke-free and vape-free areas (health.vic.gov.au)
Early education settings (childcare centres, kindergartens, preschools)			
Public hospitals and health centres			
Certain government buildings (E.g. Victorian courts)			
Outdoor children’s play equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within 10 metres during an organised under –18s event 	No requirements, but considered <i>best practice</i> .	Playground equipment: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Children’s indoor play centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within the grounds - within four metres of any public entrance 	A sign must be displayed at the entrance	Children’s indoor play centres: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Under-age music or dance events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within the event space 	A sign must be displayed	Under-age music or dance events: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Outdoor skate park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - within 10 metres 	No requirements, but considered <i>best practice</i> .	Skate parks: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)

Outdoor sporting venue	- within 10 metres during an organised under –18s event	No requirements, but considered <i>best practice</i> .	Under-age sporting events: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Outdoor area of public swimming pool complex	- within the outdoor areas of all public swimming pool complexes	No requirements, but considered <i>best practice</i> .	Swimming pools: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Train platforms and bus and tram shelters	- on all trains, trams and buses, along with bus and tram shelters and all areas of train stations and raised-platform tram stops	Signage is required.	Train platforms and bus and tram shelters - smoke and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Patrolled beach	- between the lifesaving flags, and within a 50-metre radius of each flag, at all patrolled beaches	No requirements, but considered <i>best practice</i> .	Patrolled beaches: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Enclosed workplaces	- within any enclosed area of a workplace, including shopping centre, restaurants and licenced premises	Signage required within a retail shopping centre, bingo area or centre, a casino, an approved venue, licenced premise, or an enclosed restaurant or café.	Enclosed workplaces: smoke and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)
Outdoor dining areas	- in all commercial dining areas, and outdoor drinking area (if any part of that area is within 4 metres of an outdoor dining area unless separated by a wall that's at least 2.1 metres high)	Signage must be displayed	Outdoor dining: smoke-free and vape-free (health.vic.gov.au)

Is there a legislative requirement under the Tobacco Act to display 'no smoking' signage, or is it best practice?

In some smoke-free settings, such as schools, there is a legislative requirement to display 'no smoking' signage "at a pedestrian access point to school premises as would reasonably identify the area at or within 4 metres of any part of the pedestrian access point as a no smoking area." Whereas while children's play equipment in outdoor public spaces are legislated as smoke-free within 10m, there is no legislative requirement for 'no smoking' signage to be displayed. In this instance, displaying signage would be considered best practice.

Step 2: 'Boots on the ground' data collection

- Begin the audit by systematically surveying the site to identify areas where no smoking/vaping signage may be displayed.
- Pay particular attention to areas legislated as smoke-free for your chosen setting such as:
 - Entrances/exits to sites
 - Proximity to designated smoking/vaping areas
 - Outdoor eating/dining areas (e.g. nearby a canteen window)
 - Common areas (e.g. seating areas, spectator stands)
 - Facilities (e.g. restrooms and change rooms)
- Complete a survey entry when you identify:
 - a no smoking/vaping sign displayed
 - an area where a 'no smoking or vaping' sign should be displayed (legislative or policy requirement)
 - an area where a 'no smoking or vaping' sign could be displayed
- Take photographs as necessary to provide a visual record that you can refer back to (this is optional)
- Capture any relevant observations as part of the audit that may provide further context. This could be cigarette or vape litter, or relevant messaging such as the 'bin your butt' messaging observed.
- WPHU have created an SOP and explanatory document to guide data collectors using the survey. Please use this when collecting data.

Step 3: Data analysis and preparation of results

- Once you have completed the audit, inform the relevant contact at WPHU so that we can analyse the data and provide you with a report.
- WPHU will then generate a report summarising your results. This report includes:
 - the total number of locations and areas surveyed.
 - a summary of smoking and vaping signage, assessed against current legislation and signage requirements.
 - an overview of signage within legislated no-smoking and no-vaping areas, including whether required signage is present and visible.
- This report will help your organisation identify opportunities to update or improve signage. We can provide the raw (unanalysed) data for your area upon request.

Step 4: Utilise your findings for local impact

- Go back to the reason for collecting this data – was it to inform an immediate update of signage from 'no smoking' to 'no smoking or vaping', or was it to support further discussions and planning?
- Consider who needs to be informed of the results – is there a particular team that oversees signage in this setting or organisation that would enable you to take a systems approach to updating signage?
- Most importantly, promote and share your findings. Use your findings as an advocacy and education tool to support local action. Consider local social and traditional media, linkage to local community education campaigns that raise awareness of where smoking and vaping bans apply, reports to senior executive and management for organisational action, share with your local Council to inform their Municipal Health and Wellbeing Profiles and planning, your community health service to inform their Community Health – Health Promotion planning and programs and your local public health unit to inform their population health priorities and activities.
- Share how many 'no smoking or vaping' signs are displayed with WPHU, so we can celebrate your efforts and capture our collective impact across the catchment. Contact wphu@wh.org.au.

Contact us

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