

The cost of a packet of cigarettes will rise by \$10, vapes will be banned from sale everywhere except pharmacies, and every doctor will be able to issue scripts for nicotine vapes as a smoking cessation tool as the federal government seeks to rein in an out-of-control black market vaping industry.

Health Minister Mark Butler outlined a suite of prohibitions designed to halt the spread of nicotine-laced vapes into the community, including a ban on fruit flavours and colourful packaging aimed at children, and making vapes available for sale only at pharmacies to adults with a prescription from their doctor.

He also revealed next week's budget would levy further taxes on cigarettes and tobacco, with a 15 per cent rise over three years expected to generate \$3.3bn in excise, and send the cost of an average pack of 20 cigarettes from about \$39 to just under \$49 by 2026.

The reforms were welcomed by health and doctor's groups.

Small retailers criticised the move, saying it would do nothing to deter the thriving black market that already exists here.

Australia now finds itself in a position where an adult can walk into a shop and lawfully purchase harmful cigarettes but not buy a vape without a prescription.

There were also unanswered questions about how the government would stop people using the internet to advertise and buy vapes online.

"To make this work, we need the assistance of state and territory governments to close down the sale of vapes outside pharmacies, in convenience stores and the like," Mr Butler told the National Press Club. "I know my colleagues at state and territory level are just as committed as I am to stamping out this public health menace with a strong national coordinated response.

"We will not stand by and allow vaping to create another generation of nicotine addicts."

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews expressed some reservations about the federal government pushing the costs of enforcement on to the states.

The Australian Federal Police Association was also concerned about how it would be enforced, with president Alex Caruana saying it would have been preferable for the government to regulate vapes, allowing the funding and establishment of compliance regimes similar to the ones that exist for alcohol and tobacco.

"This is ultimately a rehashing of an old policy and police are going to bear the brunt of it," Mr Caruana said.

He welcomed the decision to tackle soaring youth vaping rates but said he was deeply concerned about how the prohibitions would be enforced, given the strong foothold recreational nicotine vaping had in Australia, despite already being illegal.

Law enforcement will have up to three interactions with vaping – first via the Australian Border Force, which will have responsibility for ensuring illegal vapes do not cross the border, then at retail shops, where state and territory police will have responsibility to ensure illegal tobacco and vaping products are not being sold under the counter.

Theoretically, a young person vaping publicly could also be challenged by police to show identification or a prescription, but such an interaction would be highly unlikely.

The Australian Medical Association welcomed the reforms and new national tobacco strategy. "Vaping has become a critical public health issue so we are very pleased with the decision to ban all vapes, including recreational vapes, outside of them being prescribed by a doctor as part of a safe and reliable strategy to help people stop smoking," AMA president Steve Robson said.

"There is a growing list of health harms posed by vaping while there is insufficient evidence vapes are a safe, effective smoking cessation tool."

Professor Robson said the requirement for vapes to be sold in pharmaceutical packaging, the ban on flavours and colours and reduced nicotine concentration for vaping products were bold measures and placed Australia in a world-leading position.

"Enforcing the new rules and cracking down on the black market will be key to their effectiveness," he said.