

Vaping Industry Participation Policies in Health Research Organisations

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Background

- The tobacco industry has established an ongoing history of interfering with the scientific discourse on tobacco smoking harms and tobacco control¹.
- This has led to the development of strict regulations in health research organisations regarding their involvement in research activity.
- Over the past few years, the vaping industry has begun to exert scientific influence in a similar fashion².
- However, current policies and practices of Australian health research organisations addressing the vaping industry’s participation in research are yet to be examined.

Aim

Investigate how vaping industry participation in research is managed and rationalised in health research organisations (HROs).

Methods

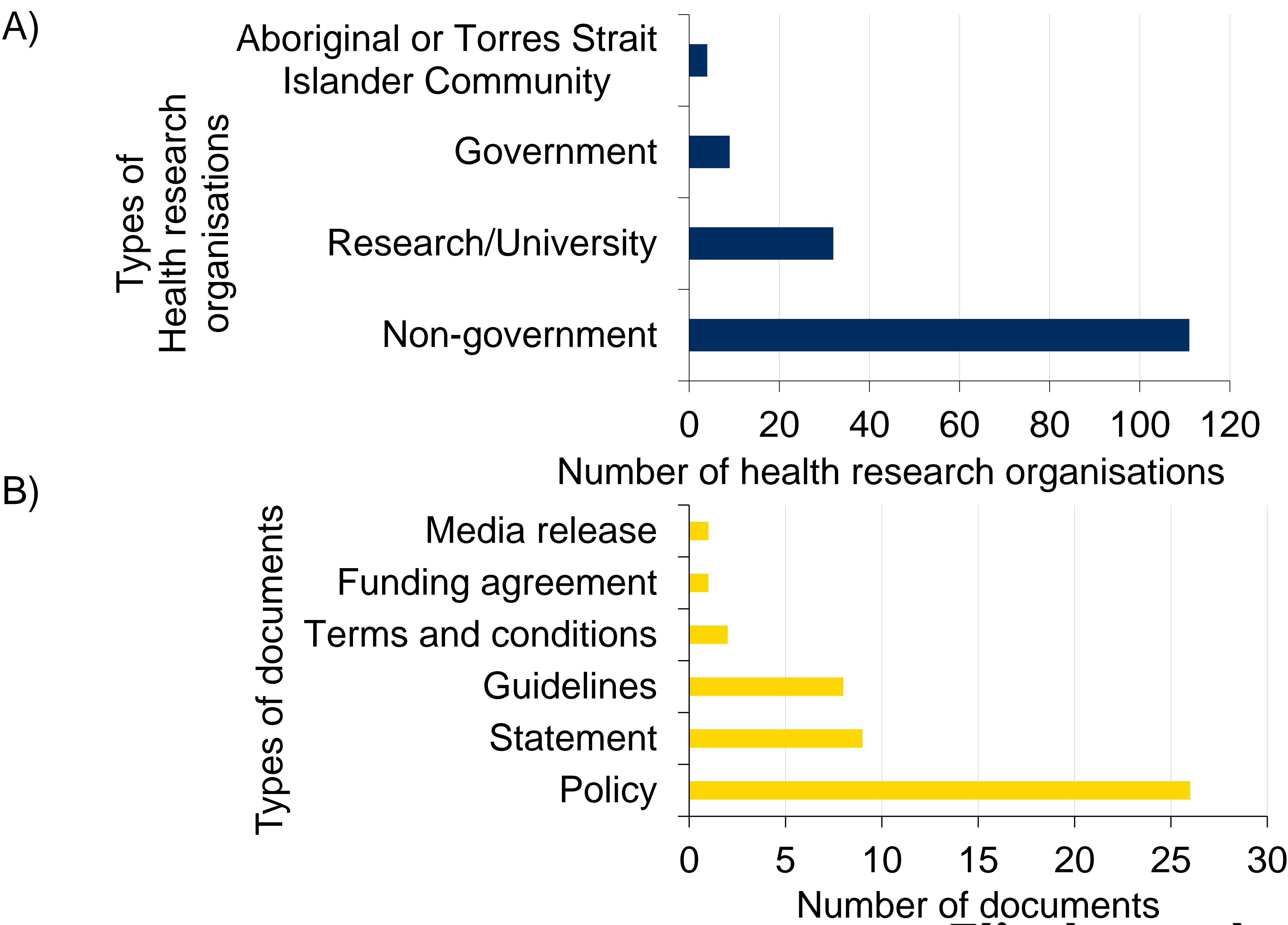
- A mixed methods study design integrating policy analysis and key informant surveys was used.
- Australian health research organisations were identified via structured Google and Google scholar searches using combinations of key terms.
- Policy documents addressing industry participation were identified via structured searches using key terms from eligible HROs.
- An anonymous Qualtrics survey link was emailed to 1-2 key contacts for each HRO identified during the study with reminders sent 2 and 4 weeks after initial contact.

Results

- Out of 47 documents:
 - **36 referred to the tobacco industry**
 - **10 referred to the vaping industry**
 - **1 referred to both industries.**
 - **43 addressed vaping industry constraints and only 3 addressed allowances**
- 31 organisations stated that they would not accept financial contributions from the industry.
- 18 organisations opposed vaping industry participation of any kind due to conflict of interest between their interests and upholding public health priorities.
- Out of 31 survey respondents, 3 stated that they would reconsider their stance of opposing vaping industry participation based on evidence relating to vaping harms, shifts in current legislation and changes to relationship between the tobacco and vaping industry.
- 3 survey respondents were also unaware of existing policies within their organisations regarding vaping industry participation. 3 more respondents expressed uncertainty about the need for policies.
- 3 respondents also highlighted specific activities that vaping industry representatives were allowed to participate in.

Conclusion

- Vaping industry participation policies are generally ambiguous.
- Health research stakeholders are encouraged to consider three recommendations:
 - **Implement a vaping industry participation policy or amend existing tobacco industry policies to explicitly include vaping industry.**
 - **Ensure that participation policies explicitly state vaping industry participation constraints in line with policy areas identified by this research.**
 - **Ensure that organisation staff members at all levels are aware of the participation policies, how to access it and its importance for sound scientific conduct within the organisation.**



References:

1. Gilmore et al. The Lancet 2015;385: 1029-1043;
2. Tan et al. The Lancet 2019; 394: 366-368.