

National Retailers Association chief Dominique Lamb to resign as questions rise over tobacco lobby

The chief of the National Retailers Association is quitting, following her chairman out the door, amid a major board upheaval and controversy surrounding mysterious tobacco funding and vaping lobbying.



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Mr Brodie quit in July after 22 years as association chairman.

A NRA spokeswoman confirmed Ms Lamb would leave the organisation after six years as its CEO and a replacement was yet to be named to lead the Queensland-based retailer lobby group that is increasingly finding itself marginalised over its lobbying for e-cigarettes.

It is believed NRA members have been informed of Ms Lamb's departure. The retailer association faces massive upheaval in its boardroom and among its management ranks with the departure of its chairman and CEO in the space of two months as rumours of redundancies also hit the group.

The NRA has decided to not issue a press release about Ms Lamb's planned departure until it has announced her replacement as CEO, a spokeswoman said.

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Dominique Lamb is leaving her role as boss of the National Retailers Association.



Former chairman Mark Brodie left the NRA in July. Picture: Liam Kidston

Tellingly, the NRA was not invited to [Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's jobs and skills summit](#) in Canberra that began on Thursday, while Australian Retailers Association boss Paul Zahra was invited and appeared on a morning panel as the only voice of the retail sector at the summit.

Ms Lamb's shock departure also follows the expiry of terms for six NRA directors last year, who had to step down and later renominated but couldn't take up their boardroom roles for a number of months.

It comes as the NRA battles to be heard as a voice for the retail sector, while also fending off criticism of the mysterious funding provided by tobacco companies, lobbying for [e-cigarettes](#) and [vaping](#).



Questions have been raised over the retail group's potential links to lobbying over e-cigarettes.

The NRA denies it was involved in any campaign with the AACS over the legalisation of e-cigarettes. The NRA has made complaints to the Press Council over reports in some publications it had joined forces with the AACS in the vaping campaign.

The NRA has denied links to the tobacco lobby but its recent financial accounts did show a jump of more than \$430,000 in funding revenue to conduct "policy services".

That funding, and Ms Lamb's public statements on vaping, came very soon after the Australian Retailers Association, newly led by Mr Zahra, and which represents most major retailers in Australia, decided to cancel a contract with tobacco company Philip Morris that was worth about \$500,000 a year that included the policy promotion of vaping.

The mass resignation of NRA board members and now its CEO could help revive retail industry plans to merge the NRA with the more powerful and influential ARA to create one voice for the entire retail sector.

In 2019 some of the nation's biggest retailers — including Bunnings, Dymocks, Woolworths, Chemist Warehouse, JB Hi-Fi and The Good Guys — jumped ship to retail sector peak body the ARA, after years of frustration trying to merge other industry groups including the NRA into a single voice for the \$325bn sector.

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