



5 of October 2017

Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By email: politicaldonations.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretariat,

RE: POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF DONATIONS

The Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission on the inquiry into political influence of donations.

ACOSH is an independent, non-government, not for profit coalition of prominent Western Australian health, education, community, social service and research bodies with a shared concern about smoking and health. ACOSH works through advocacy and collaboration on comprehensive strategies to reduce over 15,000 preventable deaths caused by smoking each year in Australia.

ACOSH recommends that political donations from the tobacco industry are prohibited under a new Commonwealth Law. Such a ban is consistent with the Article 5.3 of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), to which Australia is signatory. The WHO FCTC recognises the irreconcilable conflict between public health and the tobacco industry and urges all parties to protect public policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.

In its Article 5.3 Guidelines, the FCTC calls on parties to avoid conflicts of interests *'Payments, gifts and services, monetary or in-kind, and research funding offered by the tobacco industry to government institutions, officials or employees can create conflicts of interest. Conflicting interests are created even if a promise of favourable consideration is not given in exchange, as the potential exists for personal interest to influence official responsibilities'*.

The tobacco industry has a record going back over 60 years of lying, deception and racketeering. It is the world's most lethal industry and has also been shown to be the world's least reputable, responsible for one million Australian deaths since the harms of smoking were identified in 1950. A recent report rated tobacco as first among the global social burdens generated by human beings, ahead of "armed violence, war and terrorism". Furthermore, the industry has a long history of opposing and undermining the efforts of Australian and other governments and health authorities to reduce smoking.

It is clear from the internal documents of the tobacco industry that the only reason for donations to political parties is to exert influence over the political process and public health policy.

It is concerning that Australian political parties are still receiving political donations from the tobacco industry. For example, The National Party received \$25,580 during the financial years 2014/2016 from Phillip Morris, while the Liberal Democratic Party received \$20,140 from the same company during 2015/2016 (Donor Report, Australian Electoral Commission). This is contrary to Australia's obligations under the WHO FCTC.

ACOSH recommends the committee consider the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981* (NSW) that prohibits donations from corporations such as property developers, tobacco industry, liquor or gambling industry business entities, or a person who is a close associate of the above. We consider such legislation is a valuable framework and starting point in forming recommendations as NSW currently has the strongest legislation on political donations in Australia.

We trust this information is helpful.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Maurice G Swanson
President
Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH)