

*40th Anniversary 1971 - 2011*

# ACOSH

Australian Council on Smoking and Health

24 June 2011

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters  
Department of House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To the Secretary of the Committee,

## **Submission to the Inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns. This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), with a membership comprising 39 medical, health, community and educational organisations with a shared concern about smoking and health (see Attachment 1 for ACOSH Membership).

ACOSH welcomes the government's inquiry into the funding of political parties and election campaigns as it believes that there is an urgent need for reform.

ACOSH is concerned that the current system for financing political parties undermines the democratic process. Specifically, ACOSH is concerned with remaining donations made by tobacco companies to any political parties, including donations made by third party 'front' groups which act on behalf of the tobacco industry. Therefore ACOSH calls for an end to all direct and indirect donations from tobacco companies to political parties due to the following reasons;

- Smoking is a leading preventable cause of death and disease in Australia, responsible for approximately 15,000 deaths annually.<sup>(1, 2)</sup> It is conservatively estimated that smoking kills about one half of all persistent users.<sup>(3)</sup> In

addition, the economic and social costs of smoking in Australia are estimated at \$31.5 billion each year.<sup>(4)</sup>

- The Australian Government will act consistently with its obligations under the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to protect health policies from interference by the tobacco industry by prohibiting contributions from the tobacco industry to political parties, candidates or campaigns. ACOSH and its partners are aware of many examples where the power and influence of the tobacco industry has resulted in delays and dilution of important health policies that were strongly supported by evidence and public opinion. Given the significant costs imposed on the community by tobacco smoking, and the enormous profit made by the tobacco industry as a result, tobacco companies should not be able to influence government policy in any way, especially through the provision of funds and/or donations.
- Despite the controversial nature of tobacco-related political donations, significant funds continue to be provided. Australian Electoral Commission data on political donations to federal parties (alone) from 1998 to 2010 categorised under “tobacco” shows that there were 62 donations totaling \$1,355,140. This figure can only be an underestimation given that donations can be made via third parties and/or ‘front’ groups, donations under \$11,500 do not have to be reported and political parties are not currently required to report on identities of corporations attending party fundraising events.
- While there has been some action by political parties at state and territory levels to publicly announce they will reject donations by tobacco companies, legislative action has been slow with the exception of NSW where election funding and disclosure reforms in 2010 included banning donations from tobacco industry entities. Action at a federal level will hasten the end of such interference by an industry which not only imposes significant pain and suffering on the community, but was also most recently ranked as the least reputable industry among all major industry categories, well behind any others.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Joint Standing Committee Inquiry and the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Tobacco Industry Donations) Bill 2011 provide an important opportunity for parties to reach agreement on much-needed reforms. ACOSH urges the Committee to support these reforms, and most specifically support an end to all direct and indirect donations from tobacco companies to political parties, including indirect donations made via third parties acting on behalf of the tobacco industry.

ACOSH congratulates the national and state political parties that have voluntarily rejected tobacco company funding. We welcome the recent all-party Parliamentary vote in support of ending tobacco funding, and look forward to a comprehensive ban on donations of this nature as a result of this inquiry.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Mike Daube  
President

Fiona Phillips  
A/Executive Director

Maurice Swanson  
Secretary

#### References

1. Begg S, Vos T, Barker B, Stevenson C, Stanley L, Lopez A. The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003. PHE 82. Canberra: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare; 2007. Available from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10317>
2. Collins DJ, Lapsley HM. The costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004–05. P3 2625. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing; 2008. Available from: [http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/mono64/\\$File/mono64.pdf](http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/mono64/$File/mono64.pdf).
3. Doll R, Peto R, Boreham J, Sutherland I. Mortality in relation to smoking: 50 years' observations on male British doctors. BMJ 2004;328:1519–33. Available from: Doll R, Peto R, Boreham J, Sutherland I. Mortality in relation to smoking: 50 years' observations on male British doctors. BMJ 2004;328:1519–33. Available from: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/328/7455/1519>.
4. Collins D and Lapsley H. The costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug abuse to Australian society in 2004/05. P3 2625. Canberra: Department of Health and Ageing, 2008. Available from: [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/34F55AF632F67B70CA2573F60005D42B/\\$File/mono64.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/drugstrategy/publishing.nsf/Content/34F55AF632F67B70CA2573F60005D42B/$File/mono64.pdf)
5. Reputation Institute and the 2011 Global Industry Survey – see ACOSH media release 15/6/11 at [www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-146978527.html](http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-146978527.html)

**Attachment 1: Members of ACOSH, June 2011**

- Aboriginal Health Council of WA Inc
- Association for the Blind of WA
- Association of Independent Schools of WA
- Asthma Foundation of WA
- Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine WA
- Australasian Society for Emergency Medicine WA
- Australian Dental Association WA Inc
- Australian Lung Foundation
- Australian Medical Association (WA)
- Australian & New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Australian & New Zealand Society of Respiratory Scientists
- Australian Sports Medicine Federation WA
- Cancer Council WA
- Curtin University, Division of Health Sciences
- Cystic Fibrosis Association of WA
- Department of Health Tobacco Control Branch
- Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service
- Doctors' Reform Society of WA
- Endocrine Society of Australia
- Environmental Health Australia
- Murdoch University, School of Environmental Science
- National Association of General Practitioners of Australia
- National Heart Foundation of Australia - WA
- Non-Smokers Movement of Australia
- Lung Institute of WA
- Public Health Association of Australia - WA
- Resident Medical Officers' Association
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
- Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia - WA
- Thoracic Society of Australia & New Zealand
- TVW Telethon Institute for Child Health Research
- Westcare Inc.
- West Australian Council of Social Services
- Western Australian Council of State School Organisations
- Western Australian Medical Students' Society