The Sydney Morning Herald

Institute opposing plain packaging funded by tobacco company <u>Swan, Jonathan</u>. Sydney Morning Herald [Sydney, N.S.W] 31 May 2012

THE Institute of Public Affairs has failed to disclose that it is receiving **tobacco** money, despite waging a strong campaign against the federal government's plain-packaging legislation.

While describing itself as an "independent" public policy think tank, the IPA will not reveal who funds its research and widely circulated publications. The Herald has learnt at least one Australian tobacco company is contributing to the IPA's coffers.

A spokesman for British American Tobacco Australia, Scott McIntyre, said the company was a member of the IPA. Corporations or individuals must donate money as a condition of membership.

The IPA's 2010 annual report shows \$1.7 million of income, of which about \$500,000 came from donations and \$900,000 from "subscriptions". The institute will not say how much of that money comes from tobacco companies.

In response to the Herald's questions, the IPA's Tim Wilson declined to confirm tobacco funding and said the group's policy not to disclose donors was the result of a letter sent to "members and potential supporters of the IPA" in 2006 by the federal Labor frontbencher Kelvin Thomson.

"It is because of actions like those of Kelvin Thomson, MP, the IPA does not disclose its membership list," Mr Wilson said.

In the early 2000s, the institute admitted publicly that it received money from cigarette companies, but as it runs its most crucial campaign in support of the **tobacco** industry, the group remains tight-lipped about its donors.

While Mr Wilson has told the media that "any funding [the IPA receives] has no impact on the policy positions we take whatsoever", this clashes with a statement by Alan Moran, an IPA director. During the Productivity Commission's 2001 inquiry into the national access regime, Dr Moran said of IPA: "We've got about 4000 funders ... there are occasions when we may take positions which are somewhat different from those of the funders. Obviously that doesn't happen too often, otherwise they'd stop funding us, but it does happen occasionally."

Philip Morris refused to confirm or deny its support of the IPA, and Imperial Tobacco Australia denied funding the IPA or "other think tanks".

Illustration

Caption: PHOTO: Tim Wilson ... says the funding does not affect policy.

Word count: 361

(Copyright (c) 2012 Fairfax Media Publications Pty Limited. www.smh.com.au. Not available for redistribution.)