

TOBACCO

Ethical Position Paper



Estimates are that over 1.1 billion people around the world smoke cigarettes. In Australia research suggests that smoking causes around 15,000 deaths each year and that the medical bills associated with the habit amount to over \$30 billion per annum.

With the shocking statistics surrounding smoking it is not hard to see why it is such a big issue in our society. While recent moves by the government in implementing smoking bans and advertising the extreme health risks that it poses are positive ones, the question is how should we be approaching the issue as Christians. We feel that a decisive view of smoking, both from a personal and investment perspective is required by us at Christian Super, both as Christians and financial stewards. Through this series of fact sheets our intention is to express our view on a range of issues, how these effect our investment strategy and hopefully provoke thought about how to invest money in an ethical and responsible way.

Brief Biblical Overview

The Bible has little to directly say on the appropriate Christian stance on tobacco and cigarettes. Since these issues have arisen in recent times, we need to understand the broader principles of stewardship of health and our relationships with God and humanity to gain a clear understanding of how a Christian should approach the issue.

Stewardship of Health

Stewardship of health is an obvious starting point for an examination of an appropriate Christian perspective on tobacco. As Karl Barth argues, "Our life is on loan from God". Just as we should respect and cherish all of God's creation we must look after ourselves during our time on this earth as we are essentially part of God's creation. Psalm 24:1 says "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." We are God's treasured possessions and so should see ourselves accordingly.

In addition, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." It is difficult to reconcile smoking, with its strong links with lung cancer, emphysema and a range of health problems, with treating our 'temple' with the respect that God commands. The Bible clearly places a responsibility on Christians to care for their bodies by not engaging in unhealthy practices, of which smoking is one of the worst.



Dependence on things other than God

The next principle to consider is that of our relationship with God and humanity. Tobacco, through its highly addictive nature, acts to create dependence. Smoking frequently becomes a master of one's life. What starts as a stress relief or social lubricant can rapidly become a lifelong habit that is incredibly hard to shake and controls behaviour. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:12, "Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be mastered by anything.'" As Christians we should not allow anything to replace the master of our lives – God.

Misuse of resources

A very basic principle also applies in this case. There is an immense financial burden that goes along with smoking. With the cost of a packet of cigarettes between \$10 and \$15 dollars and the average smoker consuming upwards of 3 packets a week the costs quickly mount up. At some point smoking is not only unhealthy but simply a waste of money. While we all spend money on unnecessary things, paying this kind of money for cigarettes that are proven to have serious negative effects is irresponsible from a Christian.

Our stance

At Christian Super we are strongly opposed to the tobacco industry. While individual Christians may feel that it is permissible to smoke, we feel the health risks involved are heavy and the associated societal burden means we hold fast to the view that it is a habit best avoided. In addition, the tobacco industry's reputation has been significantly sullied over the past few decades. Evidence shows that they have deliberately targeted youth in their advertising, suppressed the truth in relation to the health effects of smoking and attempted to obstruct court proceedings against them.

Where developed countries have acted to curb such practices some tobacco companies have simply transferred them to developing countries where legislative frameworks in relation to tobacco advertising and liabilities are not yet mature. Developing countries have far lower public health funding and so the negative effects of smoking become even more pronounced.

In addition to all these issues, Christian Super feels that it is inappropriate to invest in an industry that causes such a high degree of suffering for its customers. Potential future litigation against tobacco companies makes them a risky long-term investment and thus a bad inclusion in our portfolio from an investment perspective.

What is CS doing?

Smoking is the major preventable cause of death in modern society and so as a fund seeking to invest our funds in an ethical and responsible way we see investment in the tobacco industry as one to be strictly avoided. Consequently, the Fund excludes all companies where the production of cigarettes and tobacco products is a significant business activity (any company earning 5% of revenue or more from tobacco production). Christian Super also excludes any company where tobacco sales are a key component of their strategy (any company earning 10% of revenue or more from tobacco sales). The fund will also seek to engage with companies where we see increasing revenue from tobacco products.

"'Everything is permissible for me'—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me'—but I will not be mastered by anything."

1 Corinthians 6:12,

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FINANCIAL PLANNING

It is strongly recommended that you seek professional financial planning advice from a licensed financial adviser. Christian Super can connect you with a Financial Planner for financial advice consistent with Christian principles. Please call Christian Super on 1300 360 907.