Australian states consider $50bn tobacco case

LEVEL B1


Photo: Caleb / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. How common is smoking where you live?
2. Who should pay for smoking-related health care? Why?
3. What anti-smoking rules do you see in public places?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

proposal
an official plan or idea that someone suggests

sue
to take a person or company to court to get money or justice

compensation
money paid to cover damage, loss or costs

liable
legally responsible for something harmful

misleading
making someone believe something that is not true

evidence
facts that show something is true

screening
tests to find a disease early, before symptoms appear

taskforce
a special team formed to do a specific job

III. READING

Australian state governments are considering a proposal to sue tobacco companies for up to $50bn in compensation for hospital and healthcare costs. South Australia is formally seeking advice, and other states are reviewing the idea.

The case would target British American Tobacco, Philip Morris and Imperial Brands, and could argue the firms are liable under consumer law for misleading conduct. The six states would pool resources in a legal taskforce.

The plan seeks to recover costs since 2000, after internal documents from that year provided evidence the industry knew about serious health risks. Any funds could support cancer screening and prevention programmes. The proposal says these costs have often been paid either by smokers or by taxpayers. A BAT spokesperson said it does not comment on potential legal claims.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Australian states could sue tobacco...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which state is formally seeking advice on the plan?
2. How much money could the states seek, according to the plan?
3. Which companies would the case target?
4. Since what year does the plan aim to recover healthcare costs?
5. What could any funds from the case support?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should governments sue companies for long-term health costs? Why or why not?
2. If the states win money, what should be funded first?
3. Is it fair for taxpayers to cover smoking-related health costs?
4. Who gives more trustworthy health information: companies or governments?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Both/either/neither

Both = two together (plural noun/verb). Either = one of two (singular). Neither = not one of two (singular). You can use either/neither of + plural noun (often a singular verb).

"Two cafés near me are smoke-free, and **both cafés** *are busy."*

"A state can sue now or wait; **either choice** *has risks."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. The case targets (either / both) BAT and Philip Morris. _____
2. Both my parents smoked, but (either / neither) smokes now. _____
3. Funds may support (both / either) screening and prevention. _____
4. We have two hospitals; (both / either) hospital can treat you. _____
5. I had two screenings; (neither of / both of) them was painful. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Caleb / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach terms and names: tobacco company, compensation, consumer law, screening, taskforce; check students understand sue, liable and misleading.
- Do a first skim for the key figure ($50bn), then a second read for actors (states, companies) and timeline (since 2000) before pairs answer questions. The topic involves serious illness and addiction, so start the discussion in pairs and say students may speak about the news rather than personal stories.
- Differentiation: stronger students map the legal steps (proposal → review → taskforce → court), while others highlight lines showing who does what and how funds might be used.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Start with a quick show of hands, then pair up students from different sides to exchange two reasons each.
2. Ask students to list two spending priorities and justify them; push for a link to harms mentioned in the text.
3. Use think–pair–share; prompt with examples from the text (taxpayers, smokers, hospital costs) to keep answers grounded.
4. Set up mini-groups of three: one argues for companies, one for governments, one sums up what makes a source trustworthy.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In pairs, run a 6-minute mini-debate: should states sue tobacco firms now? Swap sides halfway.

Writing: Write a 70-word news update announcing the taskforce and its first step, using key facts from the text.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Both/either/neither

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Caleb / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which state is formally seeking advice on the plan?
   South Australia.
2. How much money could the states seek, according to the plan?
   Up to $50bn in compensation.
3. Which companies would the case target?
   British American Tobacco, Philip Morris and Imperial Brands.
4. Since what year does the plan aim to recover healthcare costs?
   Since 2000.
5. What could any funds from the case support?
   Cancer screening and prevention programmes.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. The case targets (either / both) BAT and Philip Morris. **both**
2. Both my parents smoked, but (either / neither) smokes now. **neither**
3. Funds may support (both / either) screening and prevention. **both**
4. We have two hospitals; (both / either) hospital can treat you. **either**
5. I had two screenings; (neither of / both of) them was painful. **neither of**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Both = two together (plural noun/verb). Either = one of two (singular). Neither = not one of two (singular). You can use either/neither of + plural noun (often a singular verb). (Examples constructed.)

"Two cafés near me are smoke-free, and **both cafés** *are busy."*

"A state can sue now or wait; **either choice** *has risks."*