



30 May 2024

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PRESS RELEASE

James Hardie, asbestos and the Parramatta Eels

The NRL's Parramatta Eels new major sponsorship with James Hardie is merely using a well-known sports brand to sports-wash their corporate image.

The Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia (**adfa**) strongly disapproves of this sponsorship deal.

adfa is highly critical of James Hardie for attempting to use a sports sponsorship to rehabilitate its image. When dealing with asbestos victims and families, adfa is constantly reminded of the company's "historical negligence" and failure to adequately compensate victims, despite legal obligations.

Let's recap, James Hardie was found to have continued selling the hazardous asbestos material despite knowing its dangers. It only ceased using and selling asbestos under government pressure and later attempted to avoid compensating victims by relocating its head office to the Netherlands. Whilst a trust was established in 2007 to compensate victims for the next 40 years, James Hardie has refused to pay out in a number of cases. It claims the rules of the trust don't allow it.

adfa President, Mr Barry Robson states, "this new sponsorship deal brings back painful memories for many affected by asbestos-related diseases. Seeing the James Hardie name associated with Parramatta could trigger traumatic recollections for families of victims too. Every time they see a football player now with Parramatta, they'll see the name James Hardie and it'll bring it back to them."

adfa again highlights ongoing issues with the asbestos compensation fund that was established after prolonged campaigning. Initially, the NSW government propped up the fund when James Hardie failed to make adequate contributions. The federal government under Kevin Rudd later agreed to share the underwriting responsibilities.

adfa is concerned that the company's failure to fulfil its financial obligations has required continuous government intervention to maintain payouts. adfa has long criticised Hardie's past public relations strategies, which adfa believes were designed to portray the company as philanthropic while they actually avoided financial responsibility.

Meanwhile, other advocates for victims are calling for the NRL to intervene. Tony Khoury, former executive director of the Waste Contractors & Recyclers Association of NSW said "the proposed sponsorship was appalling. Many workers and their families continue to suffer from historic exposure to asbestos, the recycling industry is forced to deal with asbestos contamination & legacy issues and James Hardie merely want to improve their corporate image, which is precisely what they did with this sponsorship in the 1980s. I truly hope the NRL intervenes," Khoury concluded.

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