



HEALTH GROUPS HAIL POU FAMILY'S DAVID AND GOLIATH BATTLE

Media statement, Monday 13 March 2006

Health groups are congratulating Janice Pou and her family for standing up to the tobacco giants, as the plaintiffs rest their case.

Janice Pou, a long-time smoker, died from lung cancer in 2002. Following her death, her children continued her suit for damages from British American Tobacco (NZ) and WD & HO Wills under the Deaths by Accident Compensation Act 1952. Mrs Pou maintained that cigarette advertising in the 1960s lured her into believing smoking was universal and sophisticated. Her lawyer, David Collins QC, finished his closing arguments today.

Smokefree Coalition director Mark Peck, on behalf of Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), the New Zealand Drug Foundation, HSC, and the Public Health Association said the Pou Case was a true David and Goliath battle.

“Even though Janice Pou knew the case was unlikely to be concluded in her lifetime, she spent her final months seeking justice. After her death, her family continued the fight.

“What made her stand all the more remarkable was that she was taking on a member of world’s second largest multinational tobacco group – British American Tobacco.”

ASH Director Becky Freeman said Mrs Pou and her family were also battling an interesting social phenomenon – a public that at times seemed to be backing the tobacco industry.

“Much to our surprise, many comments about this case from the public have supported the tobacco industry argument – that smoking is a personal choice. People seem to be very reluctant to point the finger at cigarette companies – even though they have been responsible for the deaths of around 170,000 New Zealanders over the past 50 years.

“In fact, this case is all about the lies the industry told to people like Janice Pou to encourage them to start, and keep on smoking.”

Becky Freeman said that the tobacco industry found out over 50 years ago that tobacco killed people.

“But instead of ordering an immediate product recall, it hired a PR company to increase the promotion of tobacco and cigarettes.

“Finally, someone is calling them on those lies. Whatever the outcome of this case, Mrs Pou needs to be recognised as a unique New Zealander who had the guts and commitment to stand up to the tobacco giants.”

For further comment:

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