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## **Parramatta Eels overlook asbestos victims' by signing James Hardie sponsorship deal**

The ACTU and the Asbestos Support Group Network have hit out at the NRL's Parramatta Eels for their recently announced sponsorship deal with James Hardie Industries that ignores the pain of asbestos victims and communities impacted by legacy asbestos.

In a letter to the Parramatta Eels CEO, Jim Sarantinos the ACTU, Unions NSW and Asbestos Groups have criticised the Club's decision to accept 'front-of-jersey' sponsorship from James Hardie Industries for 2025.

Sponsorship implies an endorsement by the Parramatta Eels and the NRL of James Hardies' current and past corporate behaviour, and risks diminishing the gravity of the suffering of victims and their families.

In Parramatta, the EPA has identified 50 legacy asbestos contaminated sites, where it is believed that James Hardie Industries disposed of asbestos waste materials as landfill between the 1950s and 1970s.

In Parramatta, many residents are struggling with asbestos-related diseases and every year, more than 4,000 Australians die from exposure to asbestos.

There is strong evidence that suggests James Hardie had knowledge of some of the dangers of asbestos as early as the 1930s. Despite this, they continued to manufacture and sell asbestos containing materials into the late 1980s, prioritising profits over human lives.

The aftermath has been catastrophic with victims suffering from mesothelioma, asbestos-related diseases, and other severe health conditions.

Many victims continue to fight lengthy legal battles to obtain compensation. Considering all of this, asbestos victims and their families feel let down in the wake of the Parramatta Eels James Hardie sponsorship announcement.

The risk of exposure is also far from over; the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency estimates more than 6 million tonnes of asbestos remains in Australian buildings.

On current removal projections, there will still be around one million tonnes of asbestos material in Australian homes and workplaces by 2060.

Right now, nearly all asbestos products are beyond their product lifespan, increasing the likelihood that they will deteriorate and result in more harmful exposures in the years to come.

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary, Liam O'Brien:**

"Sports organisations have a powerful influence on public perception and community values. By accepting sponsorship without considering the impact on the local community, the Parramatta Eels are overlooking the pain and ongoing struggles of asbestos victims and communities impacted by legacy asbestos.

"Corporate sponsorship in sport comes with responsibilities, and the Parramatta Eels pride themselves on being a positive force in the community and making a difference in the lives of people across Western Sydney.

“We believe that if the Parramatta Eels are to accept sponsorship from James Hardie, the club and the National Rugby League must take steps to ensure this partnership has a positive impact on the community, by supporting victims and their families.

“The Parramatta Eels and the NRL should insist that James Hardie publicly acknowledge its past; fund public education efforts; assist local communities to safely remove asbestos; and fund medical research into the prevention, treatment, and cure of asbestos diseases.

“James Hardie can more than afford to do this; the company’s latest profits show the building giant earned \$707million profit last financial year.

“James Hardie should provide funding to asbestos support groups so they can continue offering essential services to individuals diagnosed with asbestos-related diseases and their families.”

**ENDS**

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