



MEDIA STATEMENT

Asbestos Trusts Welcome Asbestos Prohibition

The decision by Government to ban the new uses of asbestos and asbestos containing materials was well overdue according to the Asbestos Relief Trust and Kgalagadi Relief Trust, both of which were set up to compensate victims of asbestos related diseases.

The Minister of Environmental Affairs & Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, announced today that Asbestos Prohibition regulations will be published tomorrow (Friday 29 March 2008).

In a joint statement, the chairmen of the trusts, Phiroshaw Camay and Brian Gibson, said that South Africa has now joined more than 50 other countries that have already banned asbestos.

“The Minister is to be congratulated on pushing through these regulations in the face of strong opposition from vested interests. Sadly, South Africa will be burdened by the legacy of asbestos for many years because these lung diseases and cancers take many years to develop,” they said.

“The measures will put a stop to the import and export of asbestos containing products. With the exception of a very small range of specialist products, manufacturers and merchants will have 120 days to clear their shelves of asbestos or asbestos containing products.”

The trusts urged Government to now focus on environmental exposure in former mining areas. The rehabilitation of asbestos mine dumps and roads made with asbestos fibres was a national priority.

Adequate and timely compensation for asbestos victims remains a major challenge, particularly as the majority of claimants are from the poorest parts of the country. While victims who were occupationally exposed may claim against the State, environmentally exposed claimants are reliant on the trusts.

The Asbestos Relief Trust has to date paid R127,5 million to 2058 claimants and the Kgalagadi Relief Trust has paid R19,8 million to 433 claimants.

“While we appreciate the efforts of the health services to assist sufferers, it is also true that many go to their graves without adequate medical support because they are simply too far from State hospitals and clinics.”

About The Asbestos Relief Trust (ART)

27 March 2008

The ART was created in 2003 following an out of court settlement between various companies that had owned asbestos mines and mills in South Africa and several claimants who were ill or had died from asbestos related diseases. The ongoing purpose of the trust is to compensate qualifying claimants who have ~~an~~ asbestos related diseases.

About the Kgalagadi Relief Trust

The KRT was voluntarily founded by Becon in 2006 in order to evaluate claims and provide adequate compensation for certain persons afflicted with asbestos related diseases contracted at the Kuruman Cape Blue and Danielskuil Cape Blue asbestos mines in the Northern Cape while the mines were under the control of the former Swiss Eternit Group.