

Australian court upholds toxic compensation

East-West loses appeal over flight attendant damages award

A flight attendant from the former Australian regional carrier East-West Airlines whose health was damaged by toxic fumes in the cabin of a BAe 146 has had a A\$138,800 (\$129,000) compensation award upheld by the country's high court, against an appeal by the airline.

Joanne Turner was working for East-West when fumes entered the cabin in the descent at the end of a Sydney-Brisbane flight in 1992. She was 25 weeks pregnant and complained of a burning throat, sore eyes, headaches and persistent cough after the incident.

It has been established that the fumes that entered the cabin pressurisation system were the result of a leaking engine oil seal.

The Australian Dust and Diseases Tribunal – the national agency with the closest area of ex-

pertise to this case – awarded Turner \$138,757 in damages some time ago, but East-West had appealed against that decision. Now the high court has upheld it.

Turner says: "I'm just very relieved it's finally over. I hope the fight will help other flightcrew."

Meanwhile, a University of New South Wales survey has found that about 25% of pilots who flew on the BAe 146 suffered long-term health degradation that deprived them of their pilot licences, and an Australian Senate inquiry found East-West and Ansett Airlines, by 2007, had been paid more than \$2 million in 1993 by BAE Systems – British Aerospace's successor – to drop complaints about the BAe 146.

Court judgements are pending on the same subject in other Australian states and in Belgium. ■