

Press release issued by Elan Vital
BRISBANE, Australia, March 9 /PRNewswire/ --

The Supreme Court of Queensland ruled on March 1 that John Macgregor, a freelance journalist, was in violation of the law when he persuaded a computer technician to steal proprietary computer files from the computers of a not-for-profit organization, and then distributed those files to an anonymously maintained Internet web site dedicated to harassing Elan Vital. The court also ruled permanently against the publication of the stolen documents.

Hate Group Scheme

The Court found that freelance journalist John Macgregor had participated in a hate group scheme to steal financial documents from Ivory's Rock Conference Centre and the not-for-profit organization, Elan Vital. The stolen documents included the personal and financial data of private citizens who had donated to the organization. Macgregor distributed the documents to an Internet hate site under an anonymous name.

Macgregor had been a member of the hate group for several months and claimed several times on the Internet that he obtained the documents from a secret source inside Elan Vital. The court found that there was no such source and that the documents were merely the fruit of plain deceit and irresponsible journalism.

The Court ruled against Macgregor on summary judgment, meaning that the record of Macgregor's unlawful acts was so strong that there was no need for the matter to go to a full trial. Macgregor has also been ordered to pay the costs of the action, which are estimated to top \$100,000.

Theft and Deceit not Journalism

In writing stories about Elan Vital and Ivory's Rock Conference Centre, it was found that Macgregor never disclosed to his editors that he was himself the anonymous source that he quoted. Macgregor used his contacts in the journalistic community to plant false and defamatory stories about IRCC and EV and manipulated unsuspecting journalists into quoting him as if he were a legitimate source. The court had previously found Macgregor in contempt of court in November 2003 when he was adjudged to have lied to the court about the means in which the service of papers upon him were delivered.

"We are glad that the Australian legal system recognizes that hate groups like this cannot lie to journalists and editors, lie to the public, or help to steal confidential documents to further their bizarre aims. While we have nothing to hide and take no issue with fair criticism, no one should have to endure the illegal behavior of self-interest hate groups following their own agenda," said Cath Carroll of Ivory's Rock Conference Centre. "This should put hate groups and bogus journalists on notice that when they cross the line into illegal acts, they will have to answer to the law for their behavior."

Elan Vital Cleared from Wrongdoing

In the court proceedings, Macgregor at first denied stealing the computer files, then, when forced to admit his scheme, tried to persuade the Court that the stolen documents showed criminal wrongdoing by Elan Vital, which justified the theft and wrongful dissemination to the anonymous hate site and to Australian newspapers.

The court strongly rejected this defense, explicitly finding that the stolen documents showed no reason at all to believe that EV or IRCC were involved in any criminal undertaking. In support of his argument Macgregor submitted a series of fabricated affidavits sworn by himself and his accomplices, first denying that they stole the documents, and then admitting the theft but trying to justify it. The court refused to accept any of these affidavits, finding Macgregor and his accomplices untrustworthy and not credible. Because it was found there had been no wrongdoing by EV, the court ruled that the hate group was simply not justified in stealing private information about innocent people involved in the organization.

The simple truth is that EV is a group of rather ordinary law-abiding people, who feel that their lives have been enriched by a message of peace to be found within, as taught by Prem Rawat, also known as Maharaji.

We hope that in the future, Australian reporters will contact Elan Vital directly if they require any information and rely only on credible and trustworthy sources before they publish. EV/IRCC was represented by Damian Scattini of Quinn & Scattini Solicitors in Brisbane. Copies of the judgment and pleadings may be obtained from him at (07) 3221 1838.

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