

## Lawyer of the week Bozena Michalowska Howells

Bozena Michalowska Howells, head of product safety and consumer law at Leigh Day, acted as joint lead solicitor with a counterpart at the firm Slater & Gordon in a group claim for more than 90,000 motorists. The judge ruled that Volkswagen, the car maker, used a “defeat device” on some of its diesel cars to cheat emissions tests.

### What were the main issues in this case?

Volkswagen vociferously denied that they installed an illegal defeat device. This was therefore a trial of preliminary



issues: was the German regulator’s decision binding on the High Court? And did the software meet the legal definition of a prohibited defeat device? The answer to both was a resounding “yes”.

**What is the best decision you have taken as a lawyer?** To take on the case of UK-based Poles who were used by German companies as forced and slave labour during the Second World War.

**Who has inspired you in life?** My father, a Polish soldier, who arrived penniless in

England in 1947. He had an incredible work ethic, but he also stayed true to his roots.

**What is the oddest thing that has happened to you in the law?** I was working on an asbestos case in Swaziland late into the night when a snake fell from the rafters in the rented house. I removed it, but the next day it reappeared while I was on the phone to my husband. He worked out it was a black mamba, just before it moved quickly across the room.

**What is the best advice you have received?** Try to have a good relationship with your opponent, but don’t allow yourself to be lulled into a false sense of security.

**Which three qualities should a lawyer have?** Group actions need teamwork, so straight-talking charm, camaraderie and honour.

**What law would you enact?** One requiring UK regulators to be proactive. Those injured as a result of taking drugs — for example, during pregnancy — should not have to campaign for years to get better warnings on pharmaceuticals.

**How would you like to be remembered?** As someone who made a positive difference to people’s lives.

**Linda Tsang**  
l\_tsang@hotmail.com