



## **Submission 99**

### **Inquiry into RAAF F-111 Deseal/Reseal Workers and their Families**

**Name: Mr Roger Lancaster**

**Quintus-Bosz, Donna (REPS)**

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**From:** Roger Lancaster [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 15 July 2008 1:28 PM  
**To:** Committee, JSCFADT (REPS)  
**Subject:** INQUIRY INTO RAAF DESEAL/RESEAL WORKERS

Please find attached my submission into the deseal/reseal inquiry which I think may be relevant in view of the process of why 482 Squadron personnel missed out on any input/benefits/health outcomes in rectifying fuel leaks on F111c aircraft.

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Bees, cows, tigers and more! [Windows Live Messenger](#) treats you to 30 free emoticons.

Job description while working on F111 aircraft at Amberley-Roger Lancaster.

Ex Warrant Officer Airframe Fitter

Jan 1963-May 1983

Please find below a job description of my service on F111C Aircraft over a period of ten years and the reasons why I think that personnel from 482 squadron should have been included in the health and support needs that were given to 3AD de seal/reseal personnel based on the findings of the SHOAMP report.

Attached to RAAF Washington-Sacramento from 5/3/73 to 1/6/73 as part of a contingent to appraise the first 6 Aircraft before acceptance into service. This appraisal covered all aspects of the aircraft including inspections for fuel leaks and subsequent repairs of same. While at Sacramento we were shown through their aircraft in various stages of disassembly and this included inspection of the fuel tanks and how they were to be repaired and what chemicals worked best for the task.

We were then attached to Edwards Air Force Base for a further 6 weeks during which time we carried out complete fuel trials on one aircraft, which involved all aspects relating to fuel problems. On arrival back at Amberley I was then involved in all aspects of servicing the aircraft at 482 squadron for a period from 1/6/73 to 15/1/80. On 22/9/80 I was then attached to Mountain Home Air Force Base to inspect the first 3 F111A aircraft for acceptance to RAAF, these inspections covered all areas of the aircraft and especially the fuel tanks as we now knew the problems we had with our own aircraft.

For the 7 years I was at Amberley from corporal through to flight sergeant I was involved in pre flight after flight inspections, C servicing but the bulk of the time I was involved in D servicing which was a major servicing for the aircraft. Before commencement of these services a check would be carried out on the fuel tanks and any leaks would be marked for repair during this servicing. The aircraft would then be defuelled and the tanks opened & vented in preparation for any repairs required. During the first few years ground support equipment was almost non-existent and if you were lucky enough you might obtain a portable air blower which was supposed to make it bearable to breathe and cool you off as quite often at Amberley temperatures outside would be in the high thirties but in the fuel tanks who knows what temperatures were obtained. No protective clothing was supplied / provided, breathing apparatus consisted of a respirator if available or else a face mask was used and clothing worn was a pair of shorts, one of the worst problems I found that affected health / breathing, was the fact that no painting facility was available at 482 sqn for many years and painting & stripping of aircraft was done at the same time as the aircraft was being serviced by every one, painters had respirators and we breathed the fumes all day long especially when we were working inside the fuel tanks.

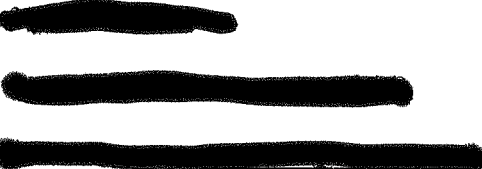
Many chemicals were used in and around the aircraft especially in the fuel tanks, no warnings & briefings were ever given on the dangers of using these chemicals & sealants as the higher ranks & officers were as unaware of the dangers as we were. Sealants were often removed / applied with bare hands in cramped conditions while quite often sitting in trapped pools of fuel as fuel could

not be completely removed from tanks. Many times after completion of servicing / fuel tank repairs, the aircraft was refuelled and because the tanks had been empty for so long leaks would appear in a completely different area and then de fuelling had to be done again and leaks repaired in the shortest time possible as we were pressured by section commanders to make the aircraft serviceable for flying operations. This pressure often meant that people were again hastily forced into fuel tanks for repairs without adequate time for ventilation or proper ground support equipment available and often dripping with fuel over them for long periods.

482 SQN personnel carried out these fuel leak repairs long before and after 3AD even attempted their first de seal/ reseal programme and were using nearly the same chemicals and sealants that were used in their programme and even after they had completed the first and subsequent deseal/reseal programmes, and Aircraft were returned to flying duties the same problems with fuel leaks existed and had to be rectified by flight line personnel or special rectification squads. When the inquiry into deseal/reseal health problems was carried out people who had worked on the FIIC at 482SQN were virtually left out of the picture with no means of getting a fair say or compensation for problems which have been caused by fuel tank entry/ repairs carried out over many years.

Problems caused to me are, I was diagnosed with psoriasis/ skin complaints in 1980 after leaving Amberley, I did not know at the time what caused this problem but many years later I suspect it was caused by my time at Amberley working on FIIC aircraft. I also suffer breathing problems/ sinus and have an aversion to any chemical/adhesive, fuel fumes of any kind in relatively enclosed situations, I have to leave as it physically makes me feel ill and dizzy .

Roger Lancaster



*RJ Lancaster*