



Submission 116

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

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This is one of those documents that should never have had to be written all. But because of incompetence by a major organization, (RAAF) I now must have my say. I joined the RAAF in Nov 75 looking for decent career and security. I found the job that at that time appealed to me. That job being a Boiler Attendant, looking after the heating and hot water units, domestic fuel supplies etc. In 1978 an incinerator was commissioned for the sole purpose of disposing of SR51 chemical and other waste that came from the Deseal-Reseal program. Little did I know that those chemicals would have such an impact on my life as they have now. I should also point out that there were six of us at that time disposing of these chemicals whose names I will give if asked (**again**).

Stuff Up No1.

The chemicals were delivered by light truck to the site next to the engine test cell and at that time were manhandled off the back of the truck on to the ground. Some drums were already leaking this mess of chemicals into the ground because they did not all have bungs in as they should have. Without any mechanical device to help offload a few backs definitely suffered. At other times drums arrived by forklift as should have been the case at all times.

Stuff up No2.

Protective clothing was non existent. Without doubt the knowledge of the volatility and toxicity of these chemicals were known. It was pointed out in the 1973 revised 1977 spill plan which is readily available even now, of how noxious these chemicals were. Why did we not have protective clothing. Please explain! If any doubt was cast, El Dorado ,the supplier, also had more than enough information on how dangerous these chemicals were. What fools let this go past

them. When burning these chemicals we were quite often splashed with the raw product when rolling drums to the area where they were being pumped up by hand to the header tank which in turn then gravity flowed into the incinerator to be burnt. Sometimes whilst trying to light the incinerator a blowback would occur with the diesel mixture (which was needed to start the burning process) would ignite in one hell of a flash and end up covering yourself with this lovely mixture of SR51 and diesel. There were all types of drums that came down for us to dispose of. God only knows what else we were heating up to a dangerous level where the toxicity actually increased.

Stuff up No3

We were all tagged by Medical Section for blood tests, but did they know what they were looking for, of course not. Do we know now? Of course not. As we got to burn more of this rubbish I started to notice a change in my personality such as anger, depression drinking more, abusiveness and rash started to persist more. One night I came home, after burning this rubbish nearly all day, and for no reason punched a hole in the wall of the bedroom. Go to medical get a Panadol go home, all fixed. I still to this day do not know why. Things now are a lot worse in regard to my general health both neurologically and physically.

I am now on Fentanyl patches, Ordine 10mg/ml and also Panadine Forte to try and keep my pain under reasonable control which I now attribute, and Three of my Medical people that I am seeing also attribute in writing that this condition is caused more probably than not to SR51.

I am also under a psychiatrist to help me control my anger and general feeling of being mentally unwell.

My life is not the one that I expected to be having now, with so much of my time spent at home moping and feeling sorry for myself. All my sport that I loved to participate in such as golf, fishing, and even walking have now become

extinct. Why was this allowed to happen? I am very angry that the system I loved did this to me and others. Too late she cried!

Now we come to what is being done for us. For a start I wish that some of the people at Veteran Affairs could just have some of our pain to help them understand just exactly what we are going through, mentally, physically and financially. Having to fight every inch of the way when we were told that we would be looked after has not helped me very much, to the stage where you really do think a lot of the time that you would be better off dead. Not having SOPs for chemical exposure is a very serious issue for a lot of people who have very serious symptoms and conditions but cannot be attributed to any normal type of complaint.

I do not think that the ex gratia payment even for myself, Tier1, was adequate for the loss of a normal life style compared to what we are putting up with now. One very important issue that is I believe needs to be addressed is what our families have had to put up with. Yelling, abuse, drunkenness and general bad behavior. A lot of these have been addressed now with more chemicals given to us by our good doctors. Our families have had to miss out on a normal life having fun taken out of theirs by these chemically affected RAAF members. That can never be compensated for. Please hurry up and get this behind us. No more fighting DVA and Military Comp. Just look after us as human beings who also served our country.

Barry Mallet

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