



## **Submission 88**

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

**Name:**

**Name withheld**

[REDACTED]

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,**

I am a member of the F111 Deseal/Reseal Support Group and below represents details of the effects that have resulted from chemical exposure from my work associated with the RAAF and in particular the Reseal Deseal Section between September 1980 and January 1982.

I attribute my mental problems of anxiety, depression, mood swings, and memory loss to my work with the RAAF. My family and friends support what I have long believed that since working with the RAAF (deseal), I have changed from someone that was regarded as happy, outgoing, intelligent, superior tradesman, well liked and respected to someone who has mood swings, is continually anxious, at times aggressive, quite often depressed, a loner, a completely different person. My personal sense of well being declined rapidly during and after my time at deseal and has remained so ever since. This change was noted by my family and work supervisors as noted in my annual reports during my 17 months at deseal between September 1980 and January 1982.

This change in personality has had a dramatic negative impact on my personal and working relationships ever since along with career goals and opportunities.

I have not progressed to my potential in the work force due to very real concerns I have had for the past 20 odd years about my ability to perform in even mildly demanding jobs, along with my inability to absorb information in the same capacity as I believe I once could. I have had to change from a supervising role to a less demanding role in an effort to improve my wellbeing, and this has impacted greatly on my self esteem.

I fail at activities that are reactive and require a cool calm head. Since my time at deseal I am more likely to overreact in these situations, sometimes getting confused and frustrated. My previous positions at work requires a calm and methodical approach to problem solving, something that I continue to struggle with, not only at work but in my personal life as well.

I have given up anything that makes me anxious outside of work, including all competitive sports such as cricket and golf. I even avoid watching live sport that will make me anxious, rather do this than suffer the side affects of anxiety.

It is impossible to be the husband and father I want to be when suffering the way I am. I am often moody, anxious, irritable, and can experience weeks of depression. At times I have difficulty living with myself, so it is easy to understand the frustration my friends and family are experiencing. My wife and children have difficulty understanding how everything can be going along so smoothly one minute and all hell breaks loose the next. The first indication that I recall of my mood swings and aggression was while I was still in the RAAF in the early 80's when for almost no reason I threatened my house mate. There

were other events and actions that happened in my final years with the RAAF after deseal that I will never be able to understand.

I am uncomfortable socialising outside of my immediate family. I avoid social gatherings and places where people accumulate in numbers. Prior to deseal I was always out on the town and looked forward to any opportunity to go to large social gatherings, even if surrounded by strangers. I loved life and I loved people.

I became a loner who often avoided socialising and meeting people. This is also noted on my annual performance reports completed by my supervisors at the time.

I used to have lots of friends, was easy to get along with, happy go lucky and fun to be with. This all changed sometime in deseal, and I am no better, maybe a little worse now. I am not comfortable meeting new people, and will go out of my way to avoid such situations. My relationships in the workplace have also suffered.

I am at war with myself from day to day, knowing what I used to be and the potential that I had, and living the way I do almost makes me ill just thinking about it. I often think of what a life I along with my family might have had? I often curse myself for the way I am.

For as long as I can remember since my association with deseal, a day does not go by where my mood swings and anxiety does not play a negative part in my life. This is often followed by periods of guilt and depression. I am unable to relax and continue to suffer from broken sleep or waking up early in a fit of panic or worrying about something. I do everything in my power to stay positive, try to forget the past and move on, but it seems to be more difficult as time goes by. I have been on medication and received counselling for years now and understand that I will continue to do so.

The most annoying part for me is that I am a different person and my children will never get to know their real dad, because the person they know is very different in character and mental ability from the person that entered deseal in September 1980.

I am anxious and worry continuously about my future. I desperately want to be an adequate provider, husband and father for my family; however I have some very real fears about my ability to do so.

I worry continuously about my health, both physical and mental, both which have already impacted significantly on our lives. Whenever I have a pain or feel a little unwell I am convinced that it is cancer and that it is life threatening, and regardless of what I do it continues to haunt me. This fear can last weeks at a time and almost drives me crazy. With the health study outcomes painting such a grim picture and knowing of the condition of some ex desealers I have become even more anxious and at times depressed about my health. This impacts greatly on my well being and I find it impossible to do anything about it.

I have much difficulty doing a lot of tasks during periods of depression. (3 – 6 weeks) I cannot seem to get motivated, feel tired with a lack of energy and just feel like giving up. I also lose libido during periods of depression. At times during these periods I have spent hours at work being non-productive, unable to concentrate or make decisions. I have briefly thought of suicide however these thoughts have been rare and only during my most depressed episodes. The thought that gets my mind back away from suicide is the impact that my death may have on my young children. During periods like I am experiencing at the moment it is hard to believe that I can get so low as to even think about it.

I do not want to leave the workforce, and am quite willing to suffer the embarrassment of taking further demotions for the sake of staying employed and hopefully improving my sense of wellbeing.

I want to move on, forget about the past and lead the best life I can with the problems I have, there is no doubt that I have suffered more mentally in the last four to five years while sorting out claim issues. It is not so much the claim, for me it is more the issues of the need to focus on the past again, something I have spent years trying not to do in an effort to maintain an acceptable sense of wellbeing. I become frustrated, irritable and depressed when I dwell on the past in relation to deseal, which of course means that I and everybody around me suffers, it is no wonder that I have tried to put all this behind me, it is better for everybody if I can.

My current accepted diagnosed conditions relating to deseal include,

**1. Neurological**

- Erectile disinfection: related to anxiety and depression (mood swings)

**2. Mental Disorders and personality changes**

- Depression
- Anxiety (GAD)

**3. Gastrointestinal problems**

- Bowel Polyps
- Ulcerative oesophagitis

Sincerely,

A thick black horizontal bar used to redact the signature of the sender.