



Supplementary Submission 25a

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

Name: Mr Clive Cust

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Sub No 25
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From: Clive Cust [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 19 August 2008 5:06 PM
To: Committee, JSCFADT (REPS)
Subject: Inquiry into F111Deseal/Reseal workers and families and ex gratia payments

Secretary of the Committee
Inquiry into F111 Deseal/Reseal Workers and Families

Dear Sir/Madam,

I read with interest the transcript with Mr and Mrs Grady and I concur that the Chief of the Air Force Angus Houston advised the packed room of group 1 participants to obtain proper financial advice at a meeting held at RAAF Base Amberley sometime in December 2004. We had been to several meetings with the CAF who presided over and enthusiastically supported the F111 Deseal/Reseal workers in their bid for some form of financial compensation for the injuries caused by toxic chemicals used in keeping our front line aircraft in the air. He would have anticipated that there would have been a realistic outcome for financial compensation or he would not have made such a broad and sweeping statement in front of a room full of hundreds of workers and their families.

On arrival at this meeting, my wife and I were greeted by numerous financial planners that had set up in the foyer. They were handing out information leaflets on how to invest wisely and the CAF was well aware of their presence as he walked through the foyer before and after the meeting. All those present at this meeting were definitely under the impression that there was going to be a realistic outcome for compensation as there was an air of anticipation and relief, especially after the CAF indicated that financial advice should be sought.

It was a slap in the face to read in the paper about the \$40,000/\$10000 on offer by the Government on the 19 August 2005. Most of my co-workers were left with a feeling of betrayal and anguish by the Government but we still believe the CAF would not have been privy to the small amount that was on offer. To make matters worse, after reconciling yourself that something is better than nothing and the letters that followed indicated that we as group 1 participants would all receive the ex-gratia payment of \$40000, we find out that the goal posts were moved to only involve the dedicated deseal/reseal programs. This was stated by a member on the compensation panel (Warrant Officer Engineer) and was quite obvious to all those who missed out that this was the case. I was knocked back because I could not prove that I was in the tanks for 30 consecutive days. I would have thought that the aircraft servicing schedule or the EE500 maintenance schedule would have shown who was working on what aircraft all those years ago. I know I was in the pick and patch deseal/reseal of A8-127 for a much longer time over a period of six months as it was in the 3AD hangar for over 15 months being the first F111 to undergo a major service in 1974-1975. There was no dedicated deseal/reseal program set up then as the programs did not start until a year or two later.

We were still exposed to the same toxic chemicals in the same foul smelling tanks with the same residual avtur fuel that could not be drained out. We lay on small pieces of foam rubber that we could scrounge to give us some relief from lying across the strengthening bars and plumbing and this soaked up the fuel into our backs as we lay in poorly lit and poorly ventilated cramped spaces for hours on end. I would like the decision makers who decided on who was eligible to go through the agony we endured then and the poor health we have now and justify their decision. The bed sheets on my side of the bed were stained yellow like most other deseal/reseal workers as the body tried to cleanse out the toxins whilst we slept. We had no idea what was causing the staining of the sheets and I was quite embarrassed when my wife would say that another set of sheets would have to be thrown out as the stain could not be washed out and was foul smelling to say the least.

I am unable to work anymore and rely on my Special Rate Pension (TPI) to make do. DVA have acknowledged some of my disability claims as being attributed to work in the fuel tanks. All I want is for some form of financial justice before I pass on. We were proud to serve our country and diligently went about the task of keeping the pride of the Air Force in the air. We were young and proud but we had no idea that the end result was poor health in what was supposed to be the golden retirement years. Pain is something I live with daily and control with

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medication but the feeling of being let down lingers on and I know that my life expectancy is not great because of this. As the Chairman said at this subcommittee when this inquiry opened, how long do these workers have to wait.

Yours faithfully

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Ex Airframe Fitter 3AD F111C

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