



Submission No 38

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

Name: Mr Jeff Holland

I was posted to the big hangar at 3AD on or about 11FEB80.

My duties included deseal reseal and major (E) service of F111 aircraft also rotary wing aircraft.

My job was to remove equipment for access and assist the airframe engineers during and after the deseal-reseal process. I then would have to ensure that the aircraft was ready to be returned to service. Much of this work was carried out in the bomb bay and wheel well areas that were underneath the aircraft. That is where all the chemical residue was. The funny thing about liquid chemicals is they don't run up hill.

The tanks may have been clean but where I was working certainly was not.

My main concern relates not so much from working in the tanks and around the rest of the airframe (as the F111 have an extensive avionics system of cables, coaxial cables and wave guide throughout most of the airframe) but from the times I spent walking through ankle deep SR51.

On frequent occasions during the Deseal process I would be sent down the "rag hangar" to remove equipment which was required to keep other aircraft flying.

Whilst removing this equipment the only path to the aircraft was through the huge drip tray which the F111 was parked in. The drip tray would be half full of SR51 (the SR51 was sprayed through the fuel tanks and collected in the drip tray, it was re-circulated until the goop was softened.)

While walking through the drip tray the SR51 would soak my shoes and socks. Safety equipment was not supplied; all we wore was a light blue T-shirt, grey shorts, safety shoes and a 3AD cap.

After returning to the main hangar I would wash my shoes and socks in warm water thinking that everything was O.K.

At the time I had no idea that chemicals were dangerous, all I knew was it had a real foul smell!

It wasn't until I arrived at 9SQN that all the skin kept peeling off my feet. I had several months of wearing thongs to work. I would get better only for the condition to reappear once I started wearing my SR51 soaked shoes

again. I unfortunately was given the nickname of 'footrot'. The RAAF doctors thought I had some strange strain of tinea.

On several occasion I would get a rash right down one side of my body, the RAAF doctors thought that was shingles. I suppose it all makes sense now, I guess everybody has 20 20 hindsight. I didn't think that my employer would expose me to dangerous chemicals, which it seems they already knew about.

All the above information should be in my RAAF medical records however after several visits to medical section I adopted the idea that I was wasting my time with the RAAF doctors and didn't report every complaint.

As for me today, I know that I have an attitude problem, especially toward the military and the police. I feel very uncomfortable around doctors and can't even get a blood test done without going into shock, I get all clammy, nauseous and almost faint. I offered to do the medical study as long as I didn't have to give blood, they replied they didn't want to do the test without the blood work.

I still work on aircraft as I operate a small business at Archerfield airport. On the occasion I have to work around fuel sealant, the tiniest speck of sealant gives me a painful rash. All the doctors don't know why, they all think it is virile or a bacteria. All the test come back negative and the only thing that cures it is bed rest.

Please see other attachments.

The above information is correct and should be substantiated by RAAF records.

Jeff Holland.

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