



## **Submission 93**

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

**Name:**

**Name withheld**

**I DO NOT WANT MY NAME RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC,  
AS I AM STILL IN THE AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY**

I joined the RAAF and enjoyed working on aircraft, until just after the Canberra aircraft was decommissioned. This was when I was first put to work inside the F111 fuel tanks, in the Reseal Deseal program.

Reseal Deseal (RSDS) had a reputation that was worse than the vile smell that came from the RAG Hangar, (which was where they sprayed many gallons of solvent SR51 into the fuel tanks, to try and soften the sealant) the spraying didn't work that well at all. I was lucky to only visit the RAG hangar once, and that was enough for me.

I made sure to ask not to be put to work in that hangar, and was lucky enough to be put to work in the other RSDS hangars at RAAF Amberley, but away from the Rag Hangar.

In these other hangars I had to hand pick partially slimy sealant, that refused to be removed or cleaned away easily. We all found that the easiest way to get the sealant out of the fuel tank joints and seams was, to try and flush it out with copious quantities of "MIL SPEC".

This "MIL SPEC" was mainly a Mythel Ethyl ketone mixture, and that would suck the air out your lungs if you got a whiff of it.

Which was a common occurrence when working inside confined area of the F111s fuel tanks, even when wearing breathing respirators'. Your body movements would dislodge your breathing respirator, (against the sides of the fuel tank bay or your shoulders).

Because you were hand picking the goop out of small confined areas your hands would be covered with goop, regardless if you were wearing protective gloves or not. So if you had to readjust your respirator you would get a whiff of slimy solvent impregnated goop.

We were made to wear thin white cotton overalls, which were so thin that your choice of underwear was evident to all your fellow workers. Some females did choose to wear one piece swimmers, or shorts & a T-shirt under their cotton overalls.

These cotton overalls wouldn't protect you from a small spill of coffee, let alone offer protection from the cancer causing chemicals we used. The overalls were laundered for us, but I pity the people and the washing machines they used to clean these clothes with.

We were provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) gloves, which were pink dish washing gloves. (they must have been cheap) In the early days we were only allowed to use ONE pair of gloves per day, it made no difference that these gloves had swollen to twice their size, and my fingers were feeling very hot inside the gloves.

So on several occasions a handful of troops and I would all be washing/wiping down fuel pipes and associated pipes from inside the fuel tanks, with saggy, hot bloated washing up gloves (our PPE) and using "MILSPEC". Most of this time we didn't have to wear breathing respirators because we were outside of the fuel tanks (but still inside the hangar) and in the fresh air of a vacant part of the hangar, with the pipes in a wash down tub on the hangar floor.

My second tour of RSDS was from 1991 to 1994, where I was part of a team performing and supervising the F111 Wing Deseal Reseal program. When all the F111 wings had completed their RSDS, we then became F111 Fuel Tank Repair Team (FTRS), where we basically had to carryout exactly the same type of work we did in the RSDS programs, but this time FTRS performed this work inside the fuel tanks and by spot repairing fuel Tank leaks, in different aircraft and at various locations on Amberley. I have worked in RSDS and inside F111 fuel tank area's for about four years and three months.

I am a member of the F111 Fuel Tank Workers Support Group, also sometimes known as Gooptroop, and find them very helpful.

I am certain my job performance has been adversely affected by the work I carried out during my time in the DSRS programs inside F111 fuel tanks

I am also certain my short term memory has deteriorated considerably over the last few years, due to my F111 fuel tank work and the chemicals I had to use for over 4 years

I have received the EX Gratia payment, and that's about all.

I feel that I have had many years of my life adversely affected (and my life expectancy will be shortened) by the solvents we had to use inside the F111 fuel tanks, and I have received scant compensation or help in dealing with these conditions, or dealing with the effects it has had on my body.