



# **Submission 112**

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

**Name:**                      **Mr Peter Manning**

PETER JOHN MANNING  
A121283 FSGT RETIRED

DOB 13 SEP 1953

Muzammil Ali  
**Senior Research Officer**  
*Joint Standing Committee on  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade*  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

E: [muzammil.ali.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:muzammil.ali.reps@aph.gov.au)

**Dear Sir,**

**I would like to submit the following for consideration.**

**Following is some background information regarding my time at RAAF Base Amberley. I was involved in the burning of the chemical mix SR51 the after product of the F111 Reseal/Deseal Fuel Tank process.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

I joined the RAAF in October 1970, I was 17 years old, in excellent health, I trained as a Boiler Attendant at Point Cook and the RMIT. My second posting was to RAAF Base Amberley 1975 through 1981, during which time I was involved in the first F111 Reseal/Deseal (SR51) Program.

A couple of years into my posting an incinerator was commissioned to burn the waste from the F111 Fuel Tank Resea;/Deseal process. We (the Boiler Attendants) had serious concerns about burning the chemicals. However, we were ordered by the Barracks Officer to burn it, so burn it we did. When I asked the RAAF Doctors about the SR51 they said there was nothing to worry about. When I complained of headaches, sickness, even asked about potential birth defects (noted in my Medical Documents). I was told there was nothing to worry about. We were repeatedly assured there was no problem with the SR51; there was nothing dangerous - nothing to worry about. So why did they eventually send us for X-Rays and blood tests?? (Of note no further medical screening was carried out after leaving RAAF Base Amberley).

Public Works refused to carry out any maintenance whatsoever on the Incinerator – because of the SR51? – the Barracks Officer ordered the Senior Boiler Attendant, to also carry out the routine maintenance on the Incinerator. There were considerable problems with the incinerator. We would hand pump the chemical into the header tank, the slug (chemicals) would clog the filters and when you opened the door to the burner to light the diesel it (and the chemical) would blow back all over you.

The SR51 was transported to the incinerator in old 44 gallon diesel and detergent drums. There was only ever one person rostered to the Incinerator, so I (or whomever was out there at the time) had to man-handle full drums of SR51 and

PETER JOHN MANNING  
A121283 FSGT RETIRED

DOB 13 SEP 1953

diesel, as close to the Incinerator as practicable. The drums were heavy and I (we) wanted to move them as little as possible. No mechanical lifting or moving devices were used to relocate drums (as one emptied, move the next full drum into place) we just man-handled them. The drums sat on the ground there was no cement pad or protection from the weather, they collected the rain adding to any overflow on the top, a foul combination to handle. The drums were invariably in poor condition, as they were used and reused. In the heat the fumes were horrendous. I would go home covered in the stuff, "it" was on my shoes, overalls and my skin. The smell of the SR51 stayed with you, it was in the pores of my skin, showering after work and before bed didn't make much difference. I (we were) was rostered to work out at the Incinerator for about a week at a time, I (we) had a chair near the Incinerator or I sat in my car when it become too hot in the sun (inevitably the family car also reeked of SR51).

There was no toxic signage, nothing to indicate what was being destroyed. No personal protective gear (until my overalls started to disintegrate – then they issued me (us) with white **cotton** overalls and domestic rubber gloves. My work clothing was washed at home using the family washing machine.

I followed orders during my 20 years of service, in the 1970's you did not question what you were ordered to do, if you did, it had the potential affected your AER (Airman's Evaluation Report). I worked as a Boiler Attendant and as part of those duties, I was ordered to burn the SR51 and I did. The RAAF have done their health study, a health study that was not only a lot too late, cost millions and hasn't managed to convince anyone to do anything for me. Where to from here?

Peter John Manning  
A121283

20 July 2008

## **FRUSTRATION**

- **Lack of any real progress regarding F111 Reseal/Deseal Program. Politicians need to send their advisers/aides to RAAF Base Amberley to inhale/get some chemicals (SR51 and MEK) in their lungs and on their skin. Then go home and share it with their families. A few days in the 36 degree Amberley heat, inhaling the toxic fumes as they are burnt. They then might not be quite so irreverent and blasé in their advice and petty in their costing regarding my life!**
- **Many lives have been lost and families continue to be affected because of the negligence of the RAAF and its Officers. Those who should have been held accountable for their knowledge and negligence!**
- **Documents – Letters and Messages acknowledging that Senior RAAF Officers new how toxic the Chemicals were even as early as the mid 1970's were presented to the Board of Inquiry. There was a spills plan available (stating the toxicity of the chemicals). Well I worked at the Incinerator moving drums and burning these chemicals, the site itself was not only a daily "spills disaster" but environmental disaster!**
- **I worked in these horrendous conditions and I am suffering with medical, neurological and cancerous problems. I should not be treated with apathy and contempt by Public Servants and the very Department with which I served. Told I'm just on a Disability Pension as if I'm of no significance.**
- **How many times and in how many ways do I have to prove that I have significant health problems. It's fine to say DVA will pay my medical costs, no one can replace my health and repair the damage/suffering caused to my family and I. I was involved with the first F111 Reseal/Deseal Program burning the SR51.**
- **Amazing that in such a small mustering as the Boiler Attendants, (6 plus the SNCO) that worked burning the SR51 during this period, all have similar medical and neurological conditions.**

### **ANGER/AGRESSION**

- **This entire process, trying to make a Government, Defense Department and its bureaucrats, understand and accept what happened to me (and the others) at RAAF Base Amberley. Involved with the F111 Resea;/Deseal Program in the 1970's.**
- **My family.**

### **MEMORY/ NERVES**

- **The Doctors call it depressions I'm now on tablets**
- **I am only 54 but my memory is shocking.**
- **During the Health Inquiry I was sent to see some Psychiatrist who reported that my memory problems were not fabricated. He was lucky to get out of that room in one piece his, arrogance!**

### **SKIN**

- **My skin has been a mess since 1978.**
- **The Psoriasis is on my legs, knees, penis, genitals, between my buttocks, stomach and on my back**

### **BACK**

- **Continues to deteriorate.**

### **HEADACHES**

- **I have suffered with headaches for years and still do.**

### **SUMMARY**

- **My memory continues to worsen, my anger, aggression, frustration increase, I have panic attacks, my back continues to deteriorate, now toss in a few cancerous bowel polyps, I'm not looking real healthy.**