



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Defence Sub Committee

MEDIA ALERT
Issued: 16 April 2009

Chair: Senator Michael Forshaw
SubComm Chair: The Hon Arch Bevis

Inquiry into F-111 Deseal/Reseal personnel

Public hearing in Canberra on 16 and 17 April 2009

The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs will appear before the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade this week for its inquiry into the deseal/reseal workers who repaired and cleaned the fuel tanks of F-111 bombers. The Defence Sub-Committee is investigating a range of issues surrounding assistance packages to those affected. This includes examination of the adequacy and relevance of the ex-gratia lump sum payment scheme and a range of health care schemes.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee and federal member for Brisbane Arch Bevis said "F-111 Deseal/Reseal workers engaged in a series of four formal programs to repair leaks in aircraft fuel tanks. In addition, many Royal Australian Air Force personnel were also employed in maintenance squadrons performing ad-hoc fuel tank leak repair outside of these formal programs. During the course of these programs personnel were exposed to a range of fuels and solvents. The Inquiry is examining the possible effects that such exposure has had on the long-term health of those involved".

The Sub-Committee has resolved to hold a further public hearing at which the results of recently released health studies will be examined. Representatives from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Chemical Hazard Assessment Laboratory (University of Sydney) and Professor Frank Bowling of the Mater Hospital (Qld) will address these studies. Representatives of the F-111 Deseal/Reseal Support Group Inc will also appear.

Mr Bevis noted "the welfare and health of those affected is our primary concern. This hearing will assist the Committee greatly in understanding the complexity of the health outcomes that need to be considered".

A public hearing in Committee Room 2R1 at Parliament House Canberra on 16 & 17 April

The hearing will be webcast live on: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/> There will also be a full broadcast on the A-PAC television pay TV channel.

Further information on the hearings, including a full program and transcripts of previous hearings are available on the Committee's inquiry website at:
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/deseal_reseal/index.htm

For media inquiries, contact the Sub-Committee Chairman, The Hon Arch Bevis MP on 02 6277 4518 or (07) 3356 1555.

For all other inquiries, contact the Senior Research Officer, Muzammil Ali, on (02) 6277 2313 or visit the committee website at www.aph.gov.au/jfadt