



## **Submission No 3**

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

**Name: Mr Daniel Treleaven**

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**SUBMISSION**

**TO**

**Inquiry into RAAF F-111 Deseal-Reseal workers and their families**

The writing of this statement has been extremely difficult, talking to people outside the Deseal/Reseal group is very upsetting as they do not understand what we have been through and are still going through.

This statement has taken me almost two months to put to paper. I struggle to recall occurrences, I have very poor concentration and a short span of attention.

Many people have been affected physically, emotionally and financially, following their exposure to chemicals used during the Deseal/Reseal programmes undertaken by them as members of the RAAF, on the F111 aircraft, currently in service with the RAAF.

Most of these chemicals were in use from the time the RAAF took possession of the F111 during the seventies.

The extent of the effects of these chemicals may take years to present, meanwhile, we live with a time bomb, just waiting for the explosion, because of this no new ailments should be excluded for future treatment.

The effects on family, wives, loved ones and children is unknown and remains to be seen. Future investigation and treatment should be a matter of course.

It is unknown how many former Deseal/Reseal workers have passed away, as not all former Desealers are prepared to come forward for fear of possible ridicule, or are too sick and tired to get into a fight for their lives, the stress of which may cause them to become more ill.

I joined the RAAF in 1988, at 32 years of age with a view to a long term career, I was a fit, strong, healthy and intelligent man, weighing 78kg.

I began my service as a Clerk and then transferred to Aircraft Mechanic to build a career.

Following completion of my training at Wagga Wagga, I was posted to Amberley to Deseal Reseal (DSRS) section. Deseal Reseal section was responsible for maintenance of the fuel tanks of F111 aircraft, to prevent leaks as a result of sealant break down.

The Deseal/Reseal process required personnel to enter the internal fuel tanks and cavities of the F-111 aircraft, and remove the sealant from the tanks. Personnel also hand cleaned fasteners (screws) and fittings with chemicals and dental picks and recoated the tanks with sealant.

We were issued with white cotton overalls which were to be laundered every day. This did not always happen and we were forced to wear dirty overalls, not necessarily our own, for days some times. The rubber gloves we were issued were not suitable for the job and usually disintegrated during use.

During my posting to Deseal Reseal and following, I experienced extensive bouts of prolonged headaches and extreme lethargy and tiredness.

At one point the only way I could stay awake was to remain standing while at work. Working on F111 often requires a person to be seated or lying on top of the aircraft a couple of metres above the concrete floor.

I still suffer lethargy, depression, eye problems.

My wife had to endure the smell of the chemicals for months, sharing a bed and house with a husband whose body emitted the stench of chemicals to which I was exposed, as they leached from my body long after I was posted to another section. The sheets would reek of these chemicals and required more than one wash.

My wife has had to come to know a new Husband, she has had to endure my mood swings, depression and anxiety, to name just a few of my complaints. This eventually led to my wife becoming the principle bread winner as I became more ill. This has placed enormous stress on her and she now suffers depression.

At Fifty one, I am no longer fit, I have had two strokes and a massive seizure, I suffer from major depression, adjustment disorder, blepharitis at this point in time. I am no longer a healthy man.

Since leaving the RAAF I have had four jobs and a total of approximately two and a half years out of work.

I feel socially isolated. I have been on a Disability Pension for almost two years, and the prospects of my return to work are very poor.

My ability to realise my full potential regarding earnings and promotions has been reduced by at least 25 years.

My wife and I cannot plan too far into the future or for retirement.

The health of ex-desealers is being eroded by the apparent lack of interest of our former employers. I feel we are being bullied by Australian Government Solicitors with very deep pockets and a huge budget, employing delaying tactics and ignoring evidence.

The Governments are quite prepared to accept our service, however, in this instance, they are not prepared to accept their duty of care as an employer, when employees are placed in dangerous working conditions, due to negligence and as a result become gravely ill.

As Defence force members we are required to obey orders, we have no recourse to union support, we cannot seek assistance from external Workplace Health and Safety professionals. We are left to our own devices with our employers apparently hoping we will all throw up our hands and give up. Some of us have died in the fight, but we will never give up.

I hope for a speedy resolution to this terrible injustice, not just for me but for all those involved.

I believe this resolution should take the form of an admission of guilt, or an apology in the least, continued health care for all ex-Desealers/Resealers and their families, continued health studies into the effects of exposure to toxic chemicals used in the Deseal/Reseal process, Gold Cards for ex-service personnel, T&PI for ex-service personnel and compensation for pain, suffering, loss of quality of life and loss of future earnings etc.

We all need this to be finalised sooner rather than later, to allow people to try to plan for the future, for themselves and their families.

Please, do not let us have a protracted enquiry and settlement process as has happened in the past with the poor survivors of the Voyager disaster, or another Bernie Banton style disgrace.

Yours faithfully,

Danny Treleaven

A thick black horizontal bar used to redact the signature of Danny Treleaven.