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Senate Inquiry: Workplace Exposure to Toxic Dust

Submission

**Australian Sandblasting Diseases Coalition
Convener: Mr. Richard White.**

19th September 2005

Senate Inquiry of Workplace Exposure to Toxic Dust

Submission by Australian Sandblasting Diseases Coalition

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Major Dimet Group (1,194 actual – 1970)

Minor 1970 (1740 estimate)

Other/Regional

SUBMISSION

The purpose of this additional submission adjunct to the work dated 17th August 2005 as submitted by Prof. Thomas Faunce, Ms Katie Flower and Mr Richard White is to provide the committee with full disclosure and records of all documentation received by the ASDC.

The submission is also to convey estimates as to the number of workers involved in the Sand Blasting Industry via the inhalation of Toxic Dusts, Industrial Sprays and other airborne matter.

- We forego answering the full criteria of a normal submission, in particular sectional answers, part. A through to G. Our aim is to provide estimates, informative narrative and figures, along with copies of all documents received.

The table set out at Appendix 1 is derived from the Australian National Library and we provide the order forms along with the 'call notices' issued by the Australian National Library to verify the actual production of the Pink, Yellow and White Pages for the purposes of extracting actual numbers of companies and individuals participating in the Sand or Abrasive Blasting Industry for the period 1950 through to 1990. (Wherever possible we have used the material supplied, where this was not supplied we have simply placed 'Not Available' N/A marking in the adjacent years). See Addendums.

Before progressing, it is to be noted that despite contacting the Australian Bureau of Census & Statistics (ABS) they were unable to supply any material, other than figures for 1996 and 2001. Those figures that they supplied are not totally discernible though as they are a conglomerate figure ie. (1996) 21,774 gross employed; in (a) metal cladding (b) wall fixing (c) petrol bowser installers (d) scaffolding construction (e) steam cleaning of buildings (f) blind and awning installation and repair (g) fly screen and shutter installation (h) water proofing of buildings and (i) sand or other abrasive blasting'....

Whilst these figures do not provide an accurate breakdown of individual occupations, there are 10 divisions covered, we see them as a known secondary method of calculation to our primary method of calculation, that being, the pink, yellow and

white page telephone directories covering the period 1950-1990. If we simply divide out the 21,774 people amongst the ten headings as provided by the (ABS). We have a rough figure of guide of 2,177 persons per heading. The number provides an indicative relationship to our main source of figures and is suggestive that the primary numbers are correct.

Simply, the secondary method confirms our primary approach.

Both methods combined produce roughly the same conclusion, the significance is compelling. The method of calculation from the primary source (The National Library) is the more accurate of the two, coupled with the figures are as a known reliable source to industry participants in Sand Blasting, during 1950-1990.

It is also noteworthy (Appendix A) that we wrote and contacted on more than three occasions, the Australian Corrosion Association, in Victoria but have been unable, (due to their lack of providing any information) to ascertain any figures or information from that body, which may have produced a third way of calculation or at the very least again supported our investigations as to numbers.

BACKGROUND TO INDUSTRY NUMBERS:

We now wish to examine the findings as to numerical calculations of industry participants and individuals who carried out sandblasting in and across Australia. For this exercise apart from the actual listings as per the Pink/Yellow and White Pages entries, we have had to seek the assistance from industry experts with some knowledge of the practices particularly as we base out numbers in the middle, that being 1970. We spoke with Mr. Nick Karakasch as he was a manager and hired men in Melbourne during this exact time. His comments coupled with those of Mr. Phillip Turner, (occupational specialist Sydney) are both in tune with each employer/business which bore a representation in the directories, other than a mere mention would have been in the order of 10-20 employees per firm. A further component to this as an Industry presence is that there were two major participants in the whole of the Australian market, carrying out Abrasive Blasting at the time 1950-1990. Those being Gardner Perrot and the Dimet Group. These two large employer groups had extensive Australia wide operations. The other firms may be regarded by their

standards as minor players in the industry. Nevertheless, the two sources who had advised us that the number of employees to the minor players was between 10-20 personnel, but for the exercise and for a conservative estimate, we have limited our calculable figures to (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

The component of two major players in the industry calculation being Gardner Perrot and Dimet Group establishes them with a presence across Australia in every major capital of Australia. A minor player is included in the state capital city directory, but not repeated across Australia. We also calculate the following whose presence is not in the telephone directories, but must be taken into account when calculating the number of individuals involved in and throughout the Abrasive Industry,

Major Players

(a) Gardner Perrot

(b) Dimet Grout

Minor Players in house operations:

eg. BHP Whyalla

Newcastle

Port August

Wollongong

Backyard business operators (word of mouth)

Do-it-yourself operators

Private operators

Rural and regional areas (See incidental Pink/Yellow Pages)

Note: [Not included in any study only capital city numbers taken into account 1970 study]

The total number we conservatively estimate who worked in the Sand or Abrasive Blasting Industry over the period is well in excess of 150,000.

In arriving at this we took into account that Gardner Perrot and Dimet Group were the same size of operation.

- same size (employed upward of 1,000 pa)
- Australian wide presence
- Industry leaders
- Government Contractors across Australia
- Work Type Specialists...

(Posts, pipelines, water works, water tanks, bulk fuel storage tanks, eg BP/Shell/Mobile/Caltex) (Ships, boats, barges* also see list of actual work, Appendices 2 & 3).

For calculating purposes we have made assessment of the following:

- Dimet Group employed (as example 1, 194) in 1970.
- This was their static work force number since 1940.
- Based on declared worker numbers to their insurer (CGU).
- These worker numbers were duly copied by Davis Consultancies Pty. Ltd. from information provided by Mr Richard White, who obtained this information from (CGU) records from the period 1968 to 1974 and were found to be static.
- Also corroborated by the testimony of past workers at Dimet
- The print out of Dimet works is attached as Exhibit 4.

Arrival at estimates:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| ▪ Gardner Perrot (Like size to Dimet Group) | 1,000 pa. |
| ▪ Dimet Group | 1,000 pa. |

1950 through till 1990 is 40 years with large turnovers of staff given this transient form of occupation. One of the authors (Mr. R. White) has examined the careers of those with whom he worked and all but one of some eighteen fellows who went from South Australia to Northern Territory, left the employment of the Dimet Group. Given that the LATENCY PERIOD after breathing the toxic dust is anything from 10-40 YEARS AFTER INHALATION, before symptoms may present themselves, ANYONE WHO WORKED IN this abrasive business is liable to become ill with 10-40 YEARS.

The Minor Players, in the Sand/Abrasive Industry numbers fall as:

1970 Pink/Yellow Page listings 174 x 20 allowing for a turnover rate of 50%.

Other players: In House (BHP etc.):

Regional & Rural:

Back Yards:

Do-it-yourself:

Private Operators:

Having regard to the total numbers again it must be stressed the *Incubation Period* as latency for the inhalation of these Toxic Dusts is 10-40 years.

Professor D. Bryan, Professor Trevor Williams and Professor Hayden Walters all have stated that exposure of as little as *3 months*, is enough to ingest a lethal dose of Silica notwithstanding the other carcinogens. Latency of up to 40 years from this initial exposure.

As an example a person employed in 1990 at age 20 may not present with the disease till 2030. It is also noteworthy that compelling legislation was not enacted in Victoria till 2002.

Based on that assumption, a person entering the work force in 2002 at the age of 20 years will not potentially show signs of affliction until 2042.

Pink/Yellow Pages:

The numbers represented herein are not fully representative of the many businesses and people who did not advertise; but relied on referral for their business. For example, Dimet (see enclosed photo copies, Pink/Yellow/White pages to verify) in W.A. and S.A. for a time did not bother to advertise at all in the Pink and Yellow Pages, but had a large presence in the 'White Pages', listings only.

'The Mercury' Tasmania.

Mrs & Mrs R. White placed advertisements Australia wide on the 21st August 2004, in every major Australian newspaper in the Saturday editions of Public Notice sections. Of great disappointment was the rejection of the advertisement that we placed in every paper, but refused by the Manager of *'The Mercury'* Tasmania. We

sought a letter from the Manager of that paper (Appendix No.5) to explain why they would not accept the advertisement when every other major paper had. The contents are trite in the 'eyes of the Whites'. Therefore we have NO NUMBERS for Tasmania, NOTE ONE PERSON at all. This is staggering given that the Tasmania Pink and Yellow pages list a number of Sand and Abrasive blasting Companies who are offering their services to all parts of the state.

As part of this Submission relies on the submission dated the 17th August 2005, provided by Professor Thomas Faunce and others, we wish to draw to the attention of the Committee the Principal Director of Dimet (70% shareholding at most times, reducing in some years to 60% of the 68 companies in the Dimet Group. Mr. R. M. Bynothon of 11 Hay Court, Walkerville, S.A. 5081. Mr. Bynothon's father Clive Bynothon was before his son, the major shareholder and Chairman of the Dimet Group. In the early 1940's he was principal in Australia of North and South British Insurance, later to be taken over by Commercial Union (CGU). From the 1940 the Dimet Group were always insured with North and South British, then from 1968 till 1974 after the take-over by those companies of Commercial Union (CGU) the Dimet Group continued its cover with CGU and NZI (Part of the CGU Group). At all times the Dimet Group were insured for 'unlimited cover at common law'. (See Comm. Union v White, Pages 1-14 @ Appendices 6).

MEDICAL:

It is envisaged that should the Committee so choose to enact an extensive adoption of medical standards in support of the inhalation of Toxic dusts and substances that the following may provide useful parameters in addressing the medical issues.

- Identified Medical case of excellence centres across Australia.
- Psychological care to sufferers.
- Psychiatric care to affected individuals along with family members.
- Ongoing medical care.

COMPENSATION:

- Reduced life expectancy.
- Blighted quality of life (Family/Social/Occupational/Life Options)
- Limited and shortened career options

- Downgraded earning capacity
- Inability to perform for their family in an appropriate manner.

ONGOING MEDICAL:

- To support the known sufferers in an ongoing capacity with centres of excellence in the specific fields as Respiratory and Heart.
- To furnish and channel funding for medical grants and ongoing research into the specific viable centres and appropriate hospitals.
- Establishment of a Contingency Scheme for other sufferers whom for whatever reason come forward in the passage of time, given the latency period of the disease anywhere from 10-40 years after inhalation as exposure to the various carcinogens. i.e. All schemes and assistance be ongoing whilst there is anybody suffering.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- The OHS to review world's best practices and for the adoption of a National Body to administrate the policy over State governments and affected departments relating to the implementation of the recommendations of the National OHS body.
- Ensuring that Australian workers have adopted leading world's best practice.
- Extra staffing and funding of inspectorate section, governed by the National body, to carry out frequent inspections to ensure enforcement of its policy.
- If deemed by the Committee at its conclusion, appropriate current legislation exists, the formation of a task force duly funded to carry out inspections in each and every State and Territory to ensure levels of appropriate protection and adherence to the laws.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The very essence of the Inquiry is to put right what is/was wrong.

That being – exposure of the population (and especially workers) to continued concentrations of air borne particulate matter (of whatever type, solid or liquid matter).

It must be emphasized that despite the outlawing of Sand Blasting in the United Kingdom, in 1949, practices within Australia continued, notwithstanding the known dangers. These practices continue to this day. Government and States have been slow to take up any form of protection and the result has been failure to implement change, the practices by companies and Government has led to long term ill health in the Australian worker and ultimately early and preventable deaths.

Both the Commonwealth and its agents in many cases have breached their duty of care to the many people who helped and continue to contribute to the nation. Everyone in these industries shares in the considerable long term ill effects of the participants. Private as well as public are culpable in not securing a better method of work when the effects were well known for many years. Further, a modern example of government neglect is the final 2002 notice by the Victorian government outlawing sand blasting, some 51 years after Britain in 1949.

The prime example of government involvement, is evidenced by the list. (Some thousands of government contacts, Exhibit 6) markedly though the complicity of the Commonwealth is evidenced by the statement of the RAAF Base Commander in Darwin, Northern Territory, who oversaw all contractors and described the method and work system as 'the worst he'd ever seen' in all his experience.

It can be argued that profits were put before people! Industry participants hid behind corporate veils and used courts to frustrate the attempts made by sick and dying people, seeking justice. This is no way for a caring compassionate society to treat those who worked hard to help build Australia.

It is incumbent on the Commonwealth to finally take a lead in the plight of these people and help them to achieve amends for the wrongs previously done. Insurers where identified should also be held liable.

In addition the Committee should focus on a viable National Compensation (Modal), Commission in addition, include an up to date world's best scientific and medical information and gathering of latest advancements and discoveries. The Committee should in addition to the foregoing re-emphasize the enforcement of existing standards and to this end we recommend the funding of additional inspectors and specialized inspectorate body, on behalf of the newly formed National body to oversee Australian Standards and Compliance, with the Ordinances, are being met, by employers and government.

The Committee is strongly urged to put in place mechanisms for the government to respond to the Senate's recommendations and that the Senate enact the power for the implementation and recommendations that the Senate pronounce after its findings, in order that they be enacted within a specified time, say 12 months.

Finally failure by the government and the Commonwealth to address the final findings of the Senate Committee could and should be seen as having scant disregard for the 'due standard of care in relation to the Australian worker's safety'.

In conclusion, there are caveats on the material presented as it is by no means complete nor have all of the sufferer's come forward. Initially one advertisement placed (1/8/04) Australia wide, initiated a flood of response. With a non-existent budget it is surprising that hundreds came forward. This is by no means the final number. Mis-diagnosis, medical failure to link symptoms to condition all play a part. Given the latency period (40 years) as pronounced by medical experts, the full picture will remain unclear and numbers affected may increase till probably 2040. The departments of Health, and CSIRO and the like have (although prompted) not supplied any significant material on which to base and display, to the Senate Committee, as we would have hoped. To this end, we request that we be allowed to seek to lodge additional material, if and when it becomes available to the Committee.

EXHIBIT No.1

Firms Advertising Sand/Abrasive Blasting Positions

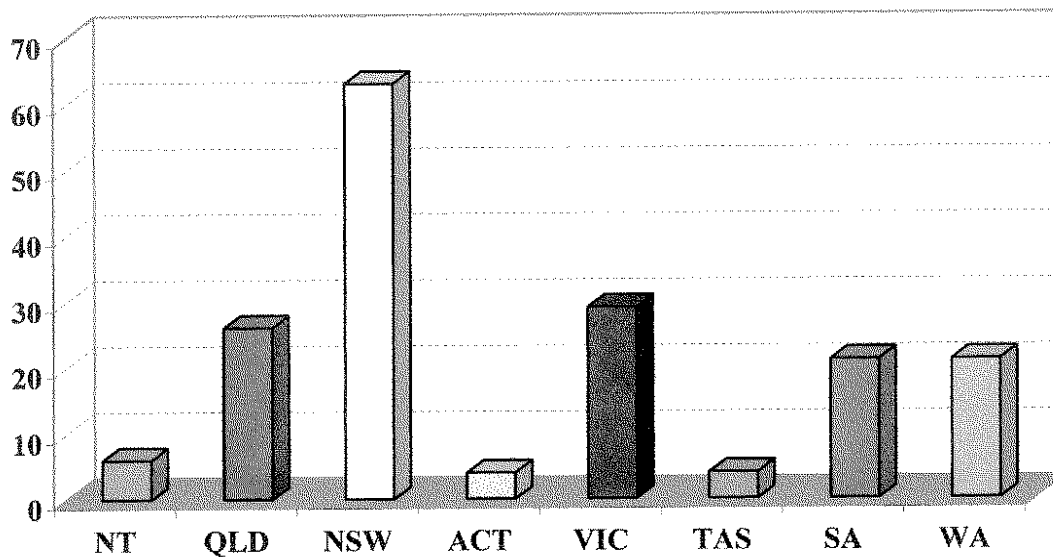
Location	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
NT	2	4	6	8	15
QLD	N/A	4	26	28	N/A
NSW	5	8	63	69	71
ACT	N/A	2	4	9	9
VIC	N/A	26	29	83	69
TAS	N/A	1	4	11	14
SA	3	4	21	31	N/A
WA	N/A	17	21	25	N/A

Study Period (1970 to 1980) Total 174

Note:

Information from the Pink & Yellow Pages Telephone Directories National Library

Number Firms Advertising Sand/Abrasive Blasting Positions in the Seventies



APPLICATIONS REQUIRING ABRASIVE BLASTING

FARMING:

- Combine Seeders
- Combine Harvesters
- Discs and Chisel Plows
- Tractors
- Trailers
- Spray machinery
- General farming machinery

STORAGE TANKS:

- Bulk storage fuel tanks eg (BP, Shell, Caltex, Mobil)
- All major water tanks around Australia
- All water storage tanks for human consumption
- All wharves and jetties Australia wide.
- Buoys for marine – fresh and salt water.
- Pylons and steel structures
- Ships and boats of all types and sizes (Australia wide)
- Large haulage machinery
- Bulk Storage granaries
- Bulk Storage Distillates

LARGE HAULAGE MACHINERY

- Tractors
- Bulldozers
- Graders,
- Mobile Water tanks
- Steam Rollers
- Lift Cullters
- Vibrators
- Earth moving equipment and large trucking.
- Mining Industry
- Barges and auxiliary equipment (Australia wide).
- Road Works (blasting off old markings) (Australia wide)
- Bridges and auxiliary works (Australia wide).
- Oil Platforms and Drill Rigs.
- Skid ramps, water planes (Vic., N.T., N.S.W., Qld.)
- Marine Harbours (descaling) Australia wide.
- Concrete pattern and impregnation.
- Glass Works
- Glass
- Reinforced Steel.

PLANES, GENERAL AVIATION.

Bases RAAF	Fuel Farm
	Planes
	Jet fighter fuel
	General equipment
Bases Navy	Fuel Farm
	Planes
	Jet fighter fuel
	General equipment

Bases Army Armoured Tanks
 Field Guns
 All military applications

Plus: Ferrous Metal
Tunnelling equipment: NSW, Vic., ACT., Tas., (all other States/Territories)
Structural Steel
Water Storage Tanks
Pipelines
Car Bodies
General Metal work
Balustrades & Handrails
Portable Building Chassis
Boat Trailers
Fuel Tanks
Steel Stairs
Platforms and Ladders
Window Lintels
Hopper Bins
Air Compressor Tanks
Architectural Metal Work
Gates and Fencing
Mining Pumps
Shipping Containers
Tubular Raking
Petro Chemical Plants
Truck and Crane Components
Boilers
Gas Processing Plant
Sewage Works
Cement Silos
Salt Works
Grain Elevators
Dam Gates & Dams
Fertilizer Plants
Wine Industry
Bureau of Metrology - Anemometer Masts & Standards
Floating Docks
Sub job BHP Newcastle
Power Houses
Accommodation Units
Blast Furnaces
Carnarvon Tracking Station
General Motors Australia
Railways (All States)
Street Lighting Poles
Chrysler Australia
W.A. State Prison
Squash Courts
Sugar Refineries

PMG Department
Work completed in metal foundries
State Gas Works WA
Commonwealth Department Works Victoria Airport
James Hardie Plants - Australia Wide
N.T. Government Various
NSW Government Various
SA Government Various
WA Government Various
Victoria Government Various
University of NSW
Weighbridges
Calton & United Breweries
Victoria Trams
Government Tracking Station
Mobil - BP - Esso - Shell - Caltex
Pontoons Australia Wide
Pig Pens
Flying Doctor Service

Basically anything made of mild steel or cast iron and metal or steel