

Dr Kathleen Dermody
Secretary
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Dear Kathleen,

Please find enclosed the National Servicemen's Association of Australia submission.

For your information, National Service was started in 1951 and was disbanded in 1972. Some 300,000 were called up for service in either the Navy, Army or Air Force during this period. The National Servicemen's Association of Australia was formed in Toowoomba in 1987 for the three Services.

A very small percentage of National Servicemen were involved in the British Nuclear Tests, mainly Navy and RAAF.

The Preliminary Nominal Roll established by DVA has identified 137 Navy National Servicemen involved in the tests. The National Servicemen's Association believes that this figure is not quite correct, and the true figure should be 400 plus.

The Preliminary Nominal Roll also identifies RAAF National Servicemen having been involved in washing down or servicing of aircraft based at Garbutt, Amberley, Richmond, Woomera, Edinburgh and Pearce. Some of these aircraft were used for collecting samples of dust after detonation.

On the 24 September 2001, DVA Director of Research and Studies, Bob Connolly, reported that the Maralinga Hospital records were missing and apparently the Hospital was the H.Q. of all operations, especially security.

In another missing document, it identifies the presence of 1173 RAAF personnel working at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland, mainly at 3 Aircraft Depot and 82 Wing. These personnel, including National Servicemen, worked daily on Lincoln aircraft that were used for collecting dust samples. During operations, Hurricane, Totem and Maralinga series, Major Batchelor reported at the November 2001 meeting that these records were also missing.

As I understand, the 8590 civilian participants listed on the Nominal Roll had already left the site prior to the first detonation in October 1952. I am also concerned that there were no nuclear test experts on the Scientific Advisory Committee.

If, and when, the final decision is made on what entitlements the surviving participants will receive, will the Government then advertise nationally advising the participants what the position will be?

The reason I ask that question is that nationally back in 1972, there were 300,000 National Servicemen that did what their country had expected of them. Today, there may be only 250,000 still living. The National Servicemen's Association of Australia national membership is around 22,000, so where are they now, the surviving members of the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force that were involved in these tests? I have to say I have grave concerns for those ex-servicemen that may not have any idea what their National Service training may have created for them some 50 years ago.

RAY SPRING
NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA