



F-111 deseal/reseal and fuel tank maintenance workers

Government Response to recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry

Overview

This Factsheet provides information about the Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the concerns of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) F-111 deseal/reseal and other Fuel tank maintenance workers.

When was the Inquiry conducted and why?

The Inquiry was conducted by the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. The Committee held six public hearings between 30 May 2008 and 17 April 2009 and considered more than 130 submissions.

The Committee tabled its report in Parliament on Thursday 25th June 2009.

The Inquiry was held to examine the health and compensation issues surrounding F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers and their families. The Inquiry was tasked with examining: the health effects on workers; the adequacy of the Government response to that point in time; and, whether the overall handling and administration of the health and compensation schemes was sufficient.

What was the outcome of the Parliamentary Inquiry?

In its report, *Sealing a just outcome: Report from the Inquiry into RAAF F-111 Deseal/Reseal workers and their families*, the Parliamentary Inquiry made 18 recommendations to Government. The recommendations broadly relate to:

- health care and support for F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers and their families;
- access to compensation using the provisions of subsection 7(2) of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) - for conditions associated with undertaking F-111 deseal/reseal and other fuel tank maintenance work;
- access to ex-gratia payments;
- occupational health and safety issues specific to Defence and the Australian Defence Forces;
- continuing statistical analysis and review of health issues affecting personnel, and medical research to help understand the underlying factors for these medical conditions.

The Government accepted 14 of the Inquiry's 18 recommendations, some in modified form, some in part and some in full.

Government Response to recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry, *continued*

A copy of the report is available online at
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/deseal_reseal/report.htm

What is the essence of the Government Response?

The May 2010 Budget contains funding for the Government Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry. It provides some \$55 million over four years, expanding the definition of eligible personnel and the benefits and services available to them (but not an expanded ex gratia scheme).

Key features of the Government Response are:

- expanding the Tier 3 definition to include many more workers – those engaged in ‘pick and patch’ deseal/reseal work, and others who entered fuel tanks as part of fuel tank maintenance work;
- providing enhanced access to compensation and health care under ss7(2) of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) for an estimated additional 2,400 personnel, including the ‘pick and patch’ workers and other trades;
- allowing Statutory Declarations as evidence to support claims;
- reopening of the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme, with access now available to many more workers;
- tasking a senior officer with health background to oversee and report on implementation of the new measures;
- expanding counselling services available to F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers and their families, through the VVCS - Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (call **1800 011 046**);
- providing a dedicated F-111 government website, jointly hosted by the departments of Defence and Veterans’ Affairs;
- expanding the Department of Defence’s occupational medicine capabilities;
- continuing the mitochondrial study undertaken by Professor Frank Bowling of the Mater Medical Research Institute, in Brisbane.

Where can I find the Government Response?

The Government tabled its full response in Parliament on 13 May 2010. The full response can be found via the Home page of the F-111 website. The site is at **f111.dva.gov.au**. The link on the home page takes you to the Government Response.

Progress on implementing the 14 accepted recommendations – Status Reports – are also available via the F-111 website’s Home page.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA relating to complex or important matters.

Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

- Fact Sheet F-111 01: **Overview**

More information

All DVA Factsheets are available from DVA offices, and on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au.

You can phone DVA for the cost* of a local call on 133 254 or free call 1800 555 254 if you are outside a major city.

Note: * Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more.

You can send an email to DVA at: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au.

You can get more help from any DVA office.