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**Document UIN**

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**PM**

**Caveat**

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NOTE: [Redacted]  
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3

3

Note: See coding sheet for Protective Marking (PM), Caveat and Prepared By codes.

For use with Documents with Protective Markings up to and including  
[Redacted]

STATEMENT of [REDACTED] of 16 Vale Street,  
Bundamba, 4304.

'61'  
RC 43

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10-10-84

I joined the R.A.A.F. on the 9th January, 1949.  
My Service No. was [REDACTED] I was posted to Amberley between  
1952 to 1954. I then went to Wagga for six months and  
then back to Amberley until 1958.

In my first period at Amberley I was a flight  
mechanic in the engine repair section and during the second  
period, I was an engine fitter.

We were involved in stripping the engines of aircraft  
used in the nuclear tests and were in charge of steam cleaning  
them. We also used an agitator for smaller parts. A boiler  
was used to dispose of waste.

Upon arrival at Amberley, the aircraft were parked  
and hosed down. They were then brought to us to be stripped.  
The purpose of the stripping was to try and decontaminate  
them. The geiger counter that was used to test the level of  
contamination used to always "run amok". The residue from  
the steam cleaning and the agitator was put in a boiler which  
blew out radio active suds and smoke. We found that we could  
not clean the parts sufficiently with steam or in the agitator  
and the whole place was radio active. Eventually, a decision  
was taken not to continue the process and the parts were  
put in drums and eventually dumped. The body and frame of  
the aircraft were put in a paddock and I understand that the  
frames were eventually dumped at sea.

My training for this type of work included a course  
conducted by [REDACTED] The course went for approximately  
one week and was largely descriptive of what happened at  
Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There were five engine fitters and four airframe fitters and others, maybe totalling twelve in all, who worked on stripping and decontaminating the aircraft. We were told the aircraft were not very radio active. In fact, they were and I believe that we were not ready to carry out the decontamination procedures.

Our protective clothing consisted of double overalls, rubber gloves (surgical rubber), half rubber boots and a surgical face mask. We were given a geiger counter check at lunch time and in the afternoon and had to take a shower. Our protective clothing was washed inside the "hot area". Because it was hot, we would often take off our face mask and as the gloves were very thin, they would become ripped and full of holes.

We had a warrant officer (medical) and each time we came out after showers, we would be checked with the geiger counter. We did a test before we showered inside the hot area, and we always had a count. On one occasion, a member of our unit, [REDACTED] got sick and we all had to have blood tests. The decontamination area was set apart from other hangars. It was a brick construction; it had an entrance area, a locker room, clothes disposal area, showers and the decontamination area. The boiler was located immediately outside the building as was the residue tank. The boiler was approximately 150' from the nearest hangar.

We had some training but the people who were washing the aircraft had no training and were often only wearing shorts. Other personnel could get near the aircraft as there were no barriers to stop them. After it was found impossible to decontaminate the aircraft, they were placed in a paddock

where they remained for many months. It is my belief that it was impossible to properly check an aircraft for radio active decontamination without stripping it.

██████████ the Amberley medical officer, never came into the decontamination area itself. I don't know what he said to other personnel not working in the area, but he told us in the decontamination unit to be very careful. And apart from the course he conducted, we were given four or five typed pages explaining about radioactivity.

At the time we were told not to discuss anything on radiation as the public were not meant to know what was going on.

I also recall that eight Canberra bombers were used in the tests at Maralinga and that there was no attempt by our unit to decontaminate them. I think that they were still in use after the test.

In total, I think we worked about six months on decontaminating the Lincoln aircraft before we finally gave up. Of particular concern during this period, was the way the radio active water went up in steam via the boiler, thus I believe polluting other areas of the base.

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