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STATEMENT BY [REDACTED]

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I was a Boilermaker Welder when I first went to Maralinga on 1st or 2nd of March, 1956 . I first worked on the air-strip for two months. We were living in four-man tents. Then we went to work at Maralinga about 3/4 hour by truck away. We commenced building laboratories, then a mess hall and a distillation plant. In June when these works were finished by gang was sent to Watson. We numbered about 18 to 20 men under the control of [REDACTED] a civil engineer and [REDACTED] (I do not know his surname) a foreman.

We worked under very trying conditions for six days and then returned to Maralinga. On four to five occasions I remember seeing men totalling 300 approximately overall, mostly civilians, coming from the directions of the testing area with raw skin on their chests and arms, holding shirts about them to protect them from the sun because it was obviously too painful to put them on. They were placed in trains and sent out of the area. I asked what was happening and a camp doctor told me that they had got too much sun. When I returned to Maralinga we were putting insulwool insulation into the laboratory buildings. I saw one technician on one day and two technicians on another day, being taken away from the laboratories and put into cars and sent away. They looked very ill. They were vomiting and had to be carried out.

There were four of us doing this work and saw this happening. We knew they were technicians because they were wearing white lab coats.

I heard explosions on two occasions. On the first occasion I, with a number of men, were taken out in three trucks from Maralinga and each truck stopping about 30 minutes apart after we had travelled for about three hours. We left Maralinga at about 6 a.m. When the trucks stopped we saw a circle approximately 50 metres in diameter with red flags around the circumference. There were about 30 men in my group. Each of the other trucks had about 30 men also. We were ordered to stand in the circle and not to go outside the line marked by the flags. Inside the ring was a Land-rover and a small "cherry picker" crane with some other small equipment.

At about 2 p.m. or 2.15 p.m. we heard a sort of noise like distant thunder, a dull bang. We saw a mushroom cloud and then a huge dusty cloud like a dust storm started moving towards us on a slight wind. It arrived about 10 to 15 minutes later after we heard the noise. We were told by two security men to put our heads down between our knees. We were just wearing shorts, singlet and a hat. They kept us there for nearly an hour afterwards. We were coughing and vomiting. About 3 o'clock we commenced our return trip to Maralinga, arriving at about 6 p.m. We all just went to the bar for a drink. They did not check us at all for radiation.

The second time, I was at the framework of a building with no roof or sides with about 10 other men. We were ordered to go up on to this to adjust some bolts. The bolts they had given us were the wrong size and it was difficult to see what job we were supposed to do. We were there for about an hour and a half. The same thing happened as before: we heard a noise like distant thunder, saw a mushroom cloud and then about 10 or 15 minutes later were enveloped by a huge cloud of dust.

In October 1956 my project manager, [REDACTED] asked us who wanted to go back to Adelaide on a military bomber. I was one amongst others who accepted the offer, all the others going home by train. In the bomber we were supplied with a grey thick overall, a black hat and a piece of black cloth. After about 20 minutes an officer came out of the cockpit and ordered all of us, about 60 men, to put this black cloth around our eyes, nose and mouth. Some of us asked him why we should do this and he told us that we were going through a very bad dusty sandstorm. Everyone obeyed the order. The aircraft was very noisy and the trip from Maralinga to Edinburgh, South Australia, took us nearly 3½ to 4 hours, which was very long.

Whilst in Maralinga I noticed a reduction in my libido and in November 1956 I fainted in a train in Brisbane. I was taken by ambulance to the Matyr Christi Hospital in South Brisbane where broncho-pneumonia was diagnosed. I was still too weak to start work by March 1957, though I tried various jobs. I April/May 1957

I started losing hair, mainly on my head. I had itchiness and pain in my oesophagus and recurring boils on the chest.

In 1962 I went back to Maralinga being employed by the Department of Supply as a maintenance worker. This was in July, August and September 1962. I lived at Maralinga Village. We were taken around and sometimes inside the contaminated areas doing maintenance work. We also went to bunkers. So far as I know there were no tests conducted at this time and I remember seeing only about 40 to 45 men whilst I was there. We were frequently obliged to pick up pieces of equipment and were given gloves to do this with, although it was often very hot and we did not use them. There were continuous dust storms sweeping in dust from all the contaminated areas. In September 1962 I was sent to Woomera where I had medical checks. Four checks were conducted. I had tests on my blood and in respect of my eyes and feet. The skin was peeling from my hands, legs and toes and I was told that I had a sort of dermatitis or eczema. This lasted until about 1970.

My doctor between 1958 and 1966 was [REDACTED] 777 Marion Road, Marion and I also consulted [REDACTED] of Peter Street, Marion, South Australia.
