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Submission to Safety Committee of [redacted] on 19/7 56

BLOOD TESTING - SERVICES AND OTHER PERSONNEL

Prior to the Buffalo tests it was agreed between the Medical Directors of the three Services that a complete medical examination, including blood cell counts, be carried out on all personnel attached or posted to Maralinga. During August 1956 [redacted] and two other laboratory technicians were attached to the R.A.A.F. Edinburgh for duty at Maralinga to carry out the complete blood examination of all Service personnel, Navy, Army, and Air, amounting to some 190 in all. During the period these examinations were being carried out at Maralinga, requests were made to the Department of Army for similar examinations to be carried out on civilians and other personnel engaged at Maralinga.

It was the opinion of the Services Medical Directors that the complete medical examination, including blood examination, was necessary as a control where personnel may be exposed to radiation. The total number of persons who subjected themselves to a complete examination was in the vicinity of 600 (including about 400 civilians) necessitating [redacted] and party making two separate trips to Maralinga, insufficient quantities of technical equipment being taken in initially. Data relating to these examinations has been recorded on Defence Services forms "Record of Exposure to Radiation". These forms have now been completed and despatched to the respective authorities concerned.

It has been decided by the Medical Directors of the Navy, Army, and Air Force that further medical examinations, including blood examinations, will be carried out on all Service personnel posted in or located at present at Maralinga before any further weapons tests take place. Those who have since left the area will be included in these further examinations. Re-examination will be excluded where personnel have been subjected to a chest x-ray examination within the previous twelve months.

A complete initial medical examination, including the blood examination, is required for reference purposes; any variation of blood estimates after exposure can thus be assessed. Secondly the record is important in view of the Defence Forces Retirement Benefits Scheme and the Repatriation Fund.

It has been suggested that the M.R.A.C. may be interested in the information which can be extracted from the records provided that the initial blood count, radiation exposure, and subsequent blood counts are recorded adequately.

The question now referred to the Safety Committee is to determine whether any personnel, other than Australian Service personnel, should have blood counts, if so are they to be subjected to subsequent blood examinations even though they may no longer be in the Maralinga area. It is suggested that it may be politically undesirable to subject civilians to blood examinations, but Peace Officers who work in the forward areas could well be included.