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**A.D.I.  
Residents Action Group**

# Fax

**To:** Nick Soon Blacktown Fairfax Sun **From:** Scott Duffus Media Spokesperson

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**Date:** April 15, 1997

**Re:** Press Release

For Immediate Release

**Subject: What has A.D.I. got to hide?**

The suitability of the St Marys ADI site for development has been called into question by the Australian Defence Industry's refusal to provide information to a NSW Health Department enquiry.

In February 1996 a petition was circulated requesting that the NSW Health Department conduct a Health Survey into the effects of the weapons production on former employees and residents of adjoining housing estates. The safety of future development on the Site was also to be investigated.

There were 2000 signatures collected when the petition was presented to the Federal MP, Roger Price and State MP, Jim Anderson in February, 1996 who were asked to forward the originals to the NSW Health Department and a copy to be sent to the Department of Defence who were responsible for the ammunition production.

When no response to the petition had been received by November 1996 enquiries were made of both politicians and it was discovered that the petition had not left Roger Price's office. Only following strong protests from members of the A.D.I. Residents Action Group was the petition presented to the NSW Health Department and further assigned to the Western Sydney Public Health Unit. Recent enquiries made with Ron Bowman of this Health Unit has uncovered allegations that have caused us great concern.

Upon receipt of the petition the Western Sydney Public Health Unit determined that three areas should be investigated. These are:

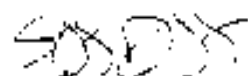
1. The Occupational health issue of the direct affect on employees of A.D.I.
2. The effects of emissions from the related industries on surrounding residents
3. Whether the site could be remediated suitably for development to occur

When the Australian Defence Industries were contacted regarding the supply of information for the benefit of the survey the Public Health Unit were told that no information would be forthcoming and that they had no right to approach them. Not only was there no cooperation from A.D.I. they then protested to the Health Department through a local Labor State MP that they had no right to seek information.

Following A.D.I.'s refusal to assist the Public Health Unit with their enquiries a formal letter was sent to the Minister for the Department of Defence from the NSW Minister for Health on the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1997. There has been no response yet received.

The question must be asked of the Australian Defence Industries as to what they have to hide in regards to the past health of former employees and also to their ability to guarantee the safety of the site to future residents if it is developed. Both Penrith and Blacktown Councils are so unimpressed with A.D.I. assurances that they have demanded a 50 year indemnity on any development on the site.

Before any approval is given to continue with the development process the people of Western Sydney deserve to be given State Government assurances from the Health Department and the Environmental Protection Agency that they are 100% certain that the site is safe for any use.



Scott Duffus

Media Spokesperson

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#### Contact Numbers

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Bill Mitchell	Australian Defence Industries	02 9350 9103

# An independent health survey

**Demand Now**

## Health and safety at the St Marys site

The St Marys Munitions Factory was built in the early 1940s, and has been operating ever since. Many of the chemicals used in munitions production are dangerous to the health of people working with them.

The occupational health and safety of the site has always been a source of friction. In the early 1980s, a parliamentary inquiry gave the site a relatively clean bill of health, while arguing for a few minor changes to the factory.

The report argued that ventilation at many of the factories was inadequate, and that many changes needed to be made to the way production occurred. In fact, some changes were later introduced: in some factories, ventilation was improved. However, the changes merely meant that more chemicals were released into the air, which increased the risks for local residents.

Not surprisingly, the Parliamentary inquiry is regarded by many as a whitewash, designed to hide the growing list of cancer victims.

## Radioactive waste

There have been many reports of radioactive material stored there: in fact, the company openly admits that quantities of radioactive waste material are stored on the St Marys site. It is not a secret.

For a long time, radioactive material has been known as a cause of various types of cancers: when the United States dropped the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945,

many types of cancers later developed in those who survived the blasts. Many Australian soldiers who were used as human guinea pigs during British atom bomb tests at Maralinga in South Australia during the 1950s, later developed cancers and have since died.

There are no arguments that radioactive materials are safe: and there are no arguments that radioactive materials are not stored at St Marys. It is terrible to think that local residents could have been used as guinea pigs to test the effects on humans of low level radiation.

## An Independent Health Survey

An independent health survey of the ADI site is absolutely necessary, to see just how many ADI employees have actually died or have contracted cancer, and whether any local residents are suffering from or have died from similar cancers due to drift from the site. We should demand:

1) the investigating body undertakes a health survey of past and current employees at the site to discover if there have been any irregularities in the incidence of cancers, birth defects or stillbirths.

2) the investigating body undertakes a similar survey of residents living within a three (3) kilometre radius of the edge of the St Marys site to see if there are any similar irregularities occurring amongst local residents.

This is needed to guarantee that the needs of ADI employees and local residents are not steamrolled by the huge financial interests involved in the proposed development of the St Marys site and the privatisation of ADI.

Authorised by the Blacktown Branch of the Socialist Party of Australia

For further information, contact Bevan on (02) 671-6821, John on (02) 626-3022, or write to P.O. Box 132, Doonside, 2767. Read *The GUARDIAN*, the Workers' Weekly.

**A Socialist Party of Australia leaflet. For more information, telephone 212 6855**