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10th June 2020

Cathal Berry TD
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

Dear Deputy Berry,

I am encouraged by recent communication from you indicating that you intend to follow up on the chemical exposure scandal/tragedy at the Irish Air Corps however I would contend that to exclude me is a folly.

I first started to research the chemical exposure issues at the Irish Air Corps in late 2007 and so I am well into my second decade investigating the now “proven” Health & Safety failings at Casement Aerodrome. If I was told back in 2007 the true scale of illness, death, unnecessary suffering and sheer human tragedy that I would eventually unearth I would find it difficult to believe.

It is now proven that the Irish Air Corps ignored the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Acts, 1989 & 2005. This despite being warned by third party experts in 1995 & 1997 that working conditions were unsafe, the Air Corps continued to flout mandatory chemical health & safety rules until the Health & Safety Authority threatened legal action against them in early 2016. As well as ignoring the aforementioned Acts, the Irish Air Corps also ignored the chemical provisions of the Pregnant Worker Directive 92/85/EEC and the Young Worker Directive. 94/33/EC. The Air Corps actually only became compliant (on paper) with the chemical provisions of the 1989 Act in December 2017, an unbelievable 28 years later.

The misuse of dangerous chemicals by the Air Corps, including carcinogens, mutagens, teratogens & immune sensitizers was so widespread that almost all working locations at Casement were affected. The aforementioned acts & directives were introduced to protect the health of employees, it therefore stands to reason that the complete disregard of these basic rules would have serious health consequences as the known dangerous chemicals do exactly what they say on the tin.

Furthermore, as a qualified doctor you will understand that time is of the essence. In a similar scandal at RAAF Amberly in Brisbane, ongoing studies showed that exposed personnel stood a 41% greater chance of suffering cancer compared to a control group. However, because of awareness, vigilance & coordination of a medical response, mortality was reduced to 27% lower than the average Australian male of the same age. This is a result we need to match or exceed.

Poor health outcomes for personnel at Baldonnel and untimely deaths are inevitable without targeted intervention. I am seeking an urgent face to face meeting (as soon as is safe to do so) with you to work together to obtain urgent medical supports & interventions for vulnerable serving & former members of the Irish Air Corps to include commissioned, enlisted, civilian & work experience personnel.

I am willing to share the data, that I have worked hard to collate, such as the death certificate information of 78 untimely deaths that highlight the urgency of this problem. Some of these people, especially the suicides (15) could possibly have been saved by interventions as provided to other militaries in similar recent scandals abroad, notably in Australia and the Netherlands. On average we are losing someone every 3 months.

To recap I need your immediate assistance to help reduce unnecessary suffering and to help prevent further unnecessary untimely deaths.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Tobin