



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

EXHIBIT 120

Minutes of Ruby Princess Cruise Ship Teleconference of 22 March 2020

Ruby Princess Cruise Ship Teleconference

Meeting opened Open: 9:30am AEST. Closed 10:20am.

Attendees: Jeremy McAnulty (Chair; NSW Health), Christine Selvey (NSW Health), Rhonda Owen (NIR TL), Vicky Sheppard (SES PHU), Kelly-Anne Ressler (SES PHU), Kylie Renzeena (Australian Border Force), Karen Webb (Commissioner of State Emergency Operation Centre NSW), Susan Pearce (Deputy Secretary NSW Health), Joel Willis (Australian Department of Health), Peter Little (Emergency Response Commander, Carnival Australia), Dr Grant Tarling (Chief Medical Officer; Carnival Cruise Line based in LA).

Minutes: Sarah Khanlari (NSW Health)

1. Current situation report:

Ruby Princess Cruise Ship docked on **19/3/2020**. Low rate of ILI on board noted on risk assessment prior to ship docking, with some passengers testing positive on rapid influenza testing (Flu A).

Upon disembarkation, 4 people tested positive for COVID-19 (1 staff; 3 passengers).

Case counts:

As of 22/3/20: **18 confirmed cases** (1 staff; 17 passengers, + **8 additional interstate cases** reported by passengers who were contacted – seeking NIR confirmation as results received in other jurisdictions, and no lab reports received).

Other:

- Of those contacted by phone-call so far:
 - o 242 reported symptoms (96 international/interstate passengers + 146 NSW residents)
 - o Testing recommended for all – pending results.

2. Passenger advice on disembarkation

- Upon disembarkation, all requested to self-isolate as per current Commonwealth advice for any person returning from any country (exception is onward travel in the case of asymptomatic **non-close** contacts).

3. Passenger advice upon diagnosis of COVID-19 post-disembarkation

- Upon confirmation of 1st positive COVID-19 result, passengers were contacted by email, text message and follow-up phone call and were asked **not onward travel as per close contact advice**.
- Some had already departed to their home port and did not answer calls (number not yet known).
- Qantas informed the National Incident room (NIR) that a large group of US citizens boarded a flight from Sydney to Dallas. NIR has informed the US national focus point (NFP).
- CDC have been informed by Carnival Cruise Line. These passengers were screened upon entry to the US. NIR has not received feedback about **number or results** of symptomatic patients entering the US on this flight.

4. Updated situation on close contact follow-up

- Service NSW have been conducting phone calls to all passengers and logging those with symptoms. Also able to run reports to NSW Health of total numbers of successful calls made.

- Advice to seek assessment and testing for any passenger with respiratory symptoms OR fever. This was communicated in the email, and reiterated in the follow-up phone calls.
- Further follow-up email developed by NSW Health has been drafted and approved. Request for Carnival Cruises to send the email, as concerns from people that the 'MOH Bunker' email looked like a scam to some passengers. Carnival Cruises agreeable and have letter in hand and can send in next 3-4 hours.
- Carnival Cruises suggest a 99% hit rate for emailing passengers (with around 1% missing emails). Expect most will be contacted. Can also track the click rate of passengers who have opened the email. Data can be provided to NSW Health in the coming days as a daily report.
- Above methods to be triangulated to ascertain number of people who have been successfully contacted and have responded to advice, and identify any potential gaps.
- Media release has also gone out yesterday, and planned again today (midday AEST) that will reflect new confirmed case numbers.

5. Update on Ruby Princess Cruise ship currently at sea: actions to date

- 1 confirmed case in a crew member who remains on board. Symptomatic recovery and remains isolated – mild illness.
- Voyage set off on 8 March. During the voyage there was 38 crew developed influenza-like illness (ILI) at a rate of 1-2 crew/day. Of these 38 crew, 17 were confirmed to have flu A, all others were negative for flu A (note 70% sensitivity of the rapid Flu A test). All these cases have been in galley or restaurant staff.
- During the voyage and prior to disembarkation, 31 cases of ILI in passengers – 15 tested positive for Flu A on rapid testing on board.
- Availability of 3 ICU bed (staffed by 2 paramedics, 2 doctors and 3 nurses).
- 1050 crew total. Lower risk cohort as all crew require medical clearance, and the burden of chronic disease is very low.
- Cruise ship is considering day 0 as disembarkation of vessel –14 days post disembarkation (2 April 2020) is the quarantine period. As COVID-19 testing is not available on board, any crew with respiratory symptoms OR fever is being included in COVID-19 case counts.
- Plan to remain at sea for this period, with adequate supplies of essentials and fuel.
- Outbreak response plan has been activated and developed in association with the US CDC, with Mark Ferson also receiving a copy.
- This includes the isolation of any symptomatic crew members on the ship, and isolation of any identified close contacts.
- Hydrogen peroxide disinfection of whole vessel is taking place.
- Daily temperature and symptoms screening of all people on the vessel (day 0 = 19/3/2020)
- All food beverage staff (>700 people) quarantined on the vessel in a separate part of the ship and being served by room service.
- Activated all communication channels on ship and crew all have access to internet (Wi-Fi).
- Technical officers (not affected and considered a protected cohort) – dining in their own areas, and being served with masks by wait staff and are practicing social distancing.
- Over the last 3 days.
- Given incubation date, cruise is expected any peaks in symptoms to be around 24/3/2020 (representing 5 days post disembarkation of passengers in Sydney).

6. Forward planning for Ruby Princess Cruise Ship

- No international berthing points currently available. Plan to keep the ship out at sea.
- Plan to declare outbreak over once there is a reduction to zero symptoms on the ship + 14 days have lapsed from disembarkation of passengers in Sydney.
- Test any new symptomatic staff for Flu A. If negative result – retain sample for COVID-19 testing.
- Request from Carnival Cruise Line to receive information on Australian guidance for clearing positive cases post recovery. Some differences from the CDC guidelines (Australian guidelines suggest that clearance after positive cases: at least 10 days post-illness, or 3 days after complete resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer).
- If further positive cases on the cruise ship, berthing plan is still uncertain, as there are no next port planned at this point (entire fleet is out of action, they will continue to maintain their ships at sea until when the borders are reopened).
- Supplies: fuel and food and fresh water are all available. Will need to refuel and get new service supplies – but there is long available time they can be self-sufficient.
- No current plan to take any positive cases off the cruise ship. Any respiratory symptoms or fever are going to be considered to be COVID-19

Actions:

1. NSW Health to send passenger information letter to Rhonda Owen (NIR).
2. Review report from Service NSW: number of passengers who were successfully contacted by telephone.
3. Send Carnival Cruises (Dr Grant Tarling) relevant Australian guidelines regarding process of clearance and lifting isolation restrictions.
4. Once NSW Health passenger information letter bulk emailed out by Carnival, they will provide a daily report of click rate (of emails being opened).
5. Carnival cruise to swab any new cases of respiratory symptoms or fever among staff for rapid influenza testing and retain any negative results for COVID-19 testing.
6. Daily teleconference 9:30am AEST: 1800 108 839, Code: 539810.