



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

# EXHIBIT 65

Statement of David Walters, dated 25 April 2020



## STATEMENT OF A WITNESS

**In the matter of:** Strike Force BAST

**Place:** Lillyfield


**Date:** 25 April 2020

**Name:** David WALTERS

### STATES:

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything that I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.
2. I am 55 years of age.
3. Kim and I were married in 1985 and he have a son, Christopher who is aged 31.
4. [REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED]
6. The cruise on the Ruby Princess was the first cruise Kim and I have been on, and the first time we have been overseas. Kim and I travelled alone.
7. Kim and I booked the cruise on the Ruby Princess with Carnival Cruises through Travel Centre in Burnie, Tasmania. After booking the cruise, we did not receive any correspondence offering us the opportunity to cancel the cruise.

Witness:

  
Francisco SANCHEZ  
Detective Senior Constable  
State Crime Command  
25 April 2020

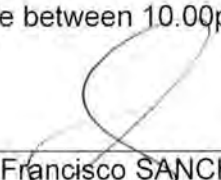
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8. On 6 March 2020 Kim and I travelled on a Virgin flight from Launceston to Sydney. From Sydney Airport, we travelled by taxi to the Shangri La Hotel in Sydney, where we had booked a room.
9. At 11.30am on 8 March 2020, Kim and I travelled by taxi to the dock in Circular Quay. We were scheduled to board at 12.30pm.
10. Kim and I went to the passenger cruise terminal, where we checked in our luggage, presented our boarding passes and possibly our passports. We were given a medallion, which was used for onboard purchasing, access to our cabin, access to information centres and a tracking system. The tracking system allowed you to find someone by putting the medallion onto an information board, which would show information about the person, including a photo and the location of the person at any given time.
11. Kim and I were told the boarding process was delayed, but we were not told why. We attended the Cruise Bar in the passenger cruise terminal for a couple hours and just walked around Circular Quay. While we were waiting to board, we met two older ladies, Jacqueline [REDACTED] and Joyleen [REDACTED] with whom we later became friends with during the cruise. They were both about 70 years old.
12. Kim and I both had mobile telephones with us, and I do not remember either of us receiving any messages in relation to the delay.
13. There were thousands of people waiting to board the ship in Circular Quay.
14. About 7.00pm Kim and I boarded the Ruby Princess. We were not told the reason for the delay when boarding.
15. Kim and I were in cabin [REDACTED] on Dolphin deck, which was possibly on level 9. We went to dinner at a buffet in a large restaurant called Horizon Court. The buffet was sometimes self-serve and sometimes the chefs served the food on the plates for passengers. From about 15 or 16 March 2020 it became more common for the chefs to serve the food on plates.
16. I do not recall the specific time the ship departed, but it was but it was dark, and it was sometime between 10.00pm and 11.00pm.

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17. Kim and I always had breakfast and lunch in the buffet restaurant. We also had dinner there most of the time. The buffet was always full, and we had to sit at tables with other people we did not know.
18. On three occasions we went to Crown Grill, which was on deck 7. The food in the restaurant was served by waitresses.
19. Kim and I went to about seven shows during the cruise; three in the Princess Theatre, two in the Explorer Lounge which was like a piano bar, and two in the Crooners Bar. Jacqueline and Joyleen went to all the shows and apart from one show, we all sat together. The seating in the Princess Theatre was like the seating in a cinema and the shows were normally about ninety percent full. The Explorer Lounge and Crooners Bar had lounge chairs and tables and were normally about sixty percent full.
20. Kim and I went to the Skywalker nightclub for drinks on two nights and there were only about half a dozen other passengers.
21. Kim and I also went to have a professional photographer to have a photo taken in the Platinum Studio on deck 19.
22. First stop was Fiordland for about four hours. Kim and I did not go ashore.
23. The second stop was Dunedin for about six hours. Kim and I had pre-organised a motor tricycle tour on the internet with Experience Dunedin. We went ashore and went on the motor tricycle tour on a four-seater motor tricycle. We met a [REDACTED] couple, Jim and Mel [REDACTED], who were on the tour with us. [REDACTED]. During the tour, which lasted about one and a half hours, we developed a friendship with Jim and Mel. After the tour, we all went to Nova Café in Dunedin, where we had something to eat and drink. After that we went our own ways.
24. The next stop was Akaora for about five hours. Kim and I had pre-organised a Little Rivers tour through Carnival Cruises. We were taken ashore with other passengers by tender and we went on the tour by coach to a town called Little River. We attended the shops, had a drink in a café and mostly spent our time sightseeing. We returned Akaora by coach and we had lunch

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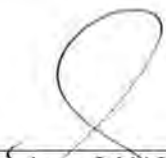
  
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onshore at a café restaurant called Brasserie. There not many people in the restaurant. We met with Jacqueline and Joyleen about midday and sat down for a talk. After parting company with them, Kim and I attended a crystal/rock shop called Hetties. We were taken back onboard by tender.

25. The next stop Wellington for about four hours. The ship docked and Kim and I went ashore. We walked around the streets looking at shops and attended a small market. We had a pre-booked tour with Carnival Cruises on the Wellington Cable Cars and we went on the tour. We returned to the ship for lunch.
26. The next stop was Napier for about five hours. The ship docked and Kim and I went ashore. We went on a coach tour of the Arch of the Ancestors, which included a show. On the tour we met a young lady crew member. We had general conversation her in relation to some video footage I had taken of the show. She wanted to download the footage onto her phone.
27. A couple of hours after returning to the ship, the Captain announced the cruise was being halted and they were turning around and going back to Sydney, because the New Zealand borders were being closed.
28. Later that night, Kim and I attended the Explorer Lounge, where we met with Jim and Mel and they introduced to a couple from the United Kingdom, [REDACTED], with whom we developed a friendship.
29. I do not recall any specific conversations about COVID-19 onboard the ship, but there was a general awareness about it prior boarding, because it was starting to become prevalent around the world. Any conversations I heard were general in nature and not about COVID-19 on the ship.
30. I recall some general announcements about hand cleaning, and we received several letters about hygiene because of COVID-19. We kept the letters, but the letters are in wife's suitcase, which is with her in the Intensive Care Unit in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.
31. I do not recall announcements or instructions about what to do in case of sickness.

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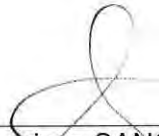
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32. On the night of 16 March 2020, Kim started feeling sick. She developed a fever, complained of body aches and a headache, had a cough and a slightly runny nose. We found the location of the sick bay on the information board.
33. Kim and I went to the sick bay and upon arrival a crew member standing outside took our temperatures. The crew member did not tell us why. Kim was treated by Doctor Ilsa (I do not know her surname), who tested her for the flu. Doctor Ilsa told us the test was negative for the flu, but she still thought Kim was suffering from the flu. Doctor Ilsa also took a swab from Kim for COVID-19 testing.
34. I had a very light cough and slightly runny nose. My temperature was taken, and a swab was also taken from me to test for COVID-19. I was not given a flu test.
35. While we were in the sick bay, I saw quite a few passengers coming in and I saw lady lying on the hospital bed and she seemed quite ill. I did not talk with the other passengers, most of whom were wearing masks.
36. The passengers were in the waiting area, possibly waiting for treatment. I believe they were going there to have temperatures checked, but I did not see anyone being treated and I was not told by any of the passengers why they were there.
37. I did not have a high temperature. Kim and I were only treated by Doctor Ilsa and a male nurse [REDACTED]. There were other medical staff in the sick bay, and I saw nurses wearing masks treating the lady on the bed.
38. Doctor Ilsa instructed us to return to our cabin and isolate ourselves, and to return to the sick bay every twelve hours to have our temperatures checked. Kim and I complied with the instructions.
39. Kim's condition was not changing, and her temperature was quite high most of the time. Doctor Ilsa recommended she take Panadol and I bought some onboard the ship.
40. The last time Kim and I went to the sick bay was 4.00pm on 18 March 2020 and there was no change in her condition.

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41. On the night of the 18 March 2020 Kim and I booked a room at the Marriott Hotel in Sydney and rebooked a flight back to Tasmania through email communications with Travel Centre in Burnie, Tasmania.
42. Kim and I were asleep when the ship arrived in Sydney and I later heard it had arrived about 2.00am. We woke up about 5.00am. Due to Kim's condition, we kept our luggage with us inside the cabin and not outside our door like the other passengers.
43. Kim and I disembarked about 10.00am with our luggage. The process was fairly quick; once the go ahead to disembark was given we received a phone call and we walked off the ship. We did not have to show our passports and we were not given any instructions on what to do. We were not given masks and we had not been given results of our COVID-19 tests. Because we were being allowed to disembark and the swabs had been taken on 16 March 2020, I thought tests must have been negative for COVID-19.
44. Kim and I walked to the Circular Quay taxi stand, where we caught a GM Cabs taxi to the Marriott Hotel. The drive was only about seven or eight minutes and we sat in the rear passenger seat. [REDACTED].
45. Kim and I stayed at the Marriott Hotel one night and after telling staff we were passengers from the Ruby Princess, we were instructed to self-isolate in the room. We ordered room service for lunch, dinner and breakfast the following day.
46. About 10.00am on 20 April 2020 Kim and I left the Marriott Hotel and travelled to Sydney Airport in a GM Cabs taxi. I remember the driver was male, but I do not remember anything else about him.
47. Kim and I went to the Virgin Airlines check-in. We did not wear masks, but we had hand sanitisers we had brought with us from Tasmania. We went to a restaurant bar called Beer De Luxe and we had a meal and a drink. I went to the Airport D Pharmacy and I bought some medication for Kim. After going to the pharmacy, I went to the Sports Craft clothing store and I bought a pair of trousers.

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48. About an hour or so later, NSW Health called Kim on her mobile telephone and told her she had tested positive to COVID-19, instructing her to stay where she was and advising somebody would come to get her. Someone from airport staff came and escorted us to an isolated area, where we were given masks and waited for ambulance to turn up.
49. Kim's fever was slightly worse, but she could still walk and talk.
50. Kim and I were taken to Royal Prince Alfred hospital (RPAH) and we were put in a room alone. We waited for about three or four hours.
51. We were taken to Norland Hostel in Ashfield by ambulance and placed in separate rooms.
52. About 10.00am on 21 March 2020 Kim's condition was not getting better and she was taken back to RPAH. Kim was still able to speak me by telephone and send SMS messages, but her condition was getting worse and I was not able to go with her.
53. Three days after I had been to the RPAH, I was informed by nurse at Norland Hostel I had tested positive to COVID-19. By then the symptoms I had been experiencing, a slight cough and runny nose, were gone.
54. On 24 March 2020 I spoke with doctor David (I not remember his surname) at the RPAH and I was informed Kim's condition was not getting better and she would have to be put on a ventilator to help her fight the virus.
55. On 25 March 2020 I was told Kim had been put on a ventilator.
56. On 20 April 2020 I was informed Kim had been taken out of an induced coma and I was able to see her on a video call. Although she was conscious, she could not talk and to date, she cannot talk.
57. About 9.00am on 24 April 2020 I spoke with Kim by video call. Although she has trouble speaking, she is able to communicate and her condition continues to improve.

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