



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

# EXHIBIT 70

Transcript and audio recording of telephone conversation between  
Steven Howieson and Dr von Watzdorf dated 19 March 2020 at approximately 12:06am

**Recording of telephone conversation**

Steve Howieson                      **VTs Manager**

Dr Ilse von Watzdorf              **Senior Doctor**

(STEVE)                      VTS. Steve speaking.

(ILSE)                        Hello?

(STEVE)                      Hello? Hi.

(ILSE)                        Hi, good morning. This is Ilse speaking. I'm here with the captain and the staff captain, and I'm the doctor. Who am I speaking with?

(STEVE)                      Hi, you're speaking to the VTS manager.

(ILSE)                        Right. So, we've received an email from Steve Howieson - - -

(STEVE)                      Yes.

(ILSE)                        - - - requesting the MARS declaration for the Ruby Princess.

(STEVE)                      That's right.

(ILSE)                        You have – we've just sent it across to you. You've received that with a few comments. And, we're just following that up with a phone call just in case you have any further questions for us. Do you want to - - -

(STEVE)                      Okay. Sure.

(ILSE)                        - - - have a look at it?

(STEVE)                      Yeah. I haven't received it yet, doctor. Just bear with me.

(ILSE)                        All right. No worries.

(STEVE)                      [Steve talking to a third person: Who's that? Yeah, Cam, okay. Just tell him I'll call him back in five, I've just got the ship's doctor.] Yeah, I still haven't – haven't received it. Did you get our latest email just regarding the people on board that you've declared and - - -

(ILSE)                        Yeah.

(STEVE)                      Yeah. So - - -

(ILSE)                        So, what we – what we received is your request for the MARS report - - -

(STEVE)                      Yes.

(ILSE)                        - - - saying – and, we've – but, also a verbal request about how many ill passengers or crew on board. So, we've got quite a few upper respiratory tract infections. And we have a few isolated guests as well, and one crewman and a few guests. We've sent the full report through to New South Wales Public Health and they've cleared

us for disembarkation with the general precaution. So, you know – and all the guests that are currently sick are in isolation.

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) So, if you look at the number for the entire cruise – you know, all the sick people – about 110, 120-odd of all sick people. But the currently ill guests and crew are isolated. All of these numbers have been sent through to New South Wales Public Health, they've reviewed it, and they've cleared us for disembarkation when we arrive.

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) We also have two medical disembarks, which they've cleared us to go ahead with - - -

(STEVE) Yeah.

(ILSE) - - - as soon as we arrive.

(STEVE) Okay. And what's the nature of the medical disembarks?

(ILSE) So, they have an upper [unclear: "ear" or "air"] infection. One guy has – has a small heart attack, and the other – the one lady has a trapped nerve with her left leg, being weak.

(STEVE) Upper [unclear: "ear" or "air"] infection. Okay.

(ILSE) They both have upper respiratory tract infections, but the reason they're getting disembarked is not so much that, more that – heart attack for the one guy.

(STEVE) Yeah.

(ILSE) Not an active – not a critical patient - - -

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) - - - but he is having, you know, cardiac ischemia.

(STEVE) Yeah.

(ILSE) And, the other lady has – looks like it's a trapped femoral nerve of the left upper – the left leg. So, a nerve - - -

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) - - - entrapment from the back.

(STEVE) Nerve entrapment - - -

(ILSE) From the lower back.

(STEVE) - - - from the back. Okay.

(ILSE) And both of those ambulances have been requested already.

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) And also both of those guests are in the medical centre also isolated, should you be concerned about the - - -

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) You know, the respiratory tract infection.

(STEVE) That's great. That's exactly what we require.

(ILSE) We – we don't have a diagnosis.

(STEVE) Yeah.

(ILSE) Yeah. We don't have a diagnosis for that respiratory tract infection. So, that will obviously need to be investigated when they get to the hospital.

(STEVE) Sure.

(ILSE) But, they are both in the medical centre, and don't - - -

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) - - - have general access to the ship's area.

(STEVE) All right. So, they're both in medical centre. Okay. So, you do require an ambulance. That's – I guess, that's what I'm getting to, because they have been receiving - - -

(ILSE) Yeah.

(STEVE) - - - calls from the Ambulance Service saying that, you know, they're not very specific, so it's very hard to determine whether it's, you know, a hoax or not. So, that's - - -

(ILSE) So – though we do have patients that will be disembarking [inaudible].

(STEVE) You have requested ambulance on arrival?

(ILSE) Yes.

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) Yeah, two - - -

(STEVE) All right. Sure.

(ILSE) - - - of them.

(STEVE) Yeah. Fine. I've just received your MARS declaration now.

(ILSE) Okay.

(STEVE) And – I'll just have a quick look at it while I've got you.

(ILSE) No worries. No worries.

(STEVE) Can I just get your number there, ma'am? Your phone number.

(ILSE) Let me just see.

(STEVE) Have you - - -

(ILSE) Do you want my cell phone number? Is that easier? I don't know what the actual [inaudible] - - -

(STEVE) It would be easier, yeah. Are you on a satellite phone at the moment?

(ILSE) I'm not. I only have – I do have WhatsApp on my phone. Or we can just get the staff captain's cell phone number, whichever one you prefer.

(STEVE) A cell phone would be good, if you've got access to one. We might have to go.

(ILSE) We don't use line numbers much. We had a few cell phone numbers at the time.

(STEVE) Right. Yeah.

(ILSE) I'll get the number in a minute to you. Just give us a second.

(STEVE) Yeah, that's fine. That's fine. Okay. What I'll do is I'll have a – are you going to stay in the bridge? Can you - - -

(ILSE) Yes. Yeah. Sure. Stay in the bridge. Yep.

(STEVE) Yeah. Okay. All right. Great, doctor. Look, I'll – I'll – you've got our number, so what I might do is contact the ship via the VHF radio, and then - - -

(ILSE) Sure.

(STEVE) - - - get – and, then get you to call us. I've just got to report to my – to the harbour master. And, then - - -

(ILSE) Of course.

(STEVE) And, then I'll – I'll give you – I'll be back in touch with you. Thanks – thanks for sending us that – the health report. And, I'll – yeah, I've just got to escalate it to my superior. But thanks for the information, okay?

(ILSE) Right. I'm assuming the pilot time is dependent on what your superior says then?

(STEVE) Yes, that's correct.

(ILSE) We don't have a fixed – we haven't got a confirmed pilot time yet.

(STEVE) No, not at this stage. Look, we'll do everything we can to get – to keep you on track. But, yeah, I've just got to - - -

(ILSE) Thank you.

(STEVE) - - - escalate this. And, yeah, we'll go from there. Okay?

(ILSE) Okay. Thank you.

(STEVE) Okay.

(ILSE) We'll be awaiting.

(STEVE) Thanks, doctor. Bye-bye.

(ILSE) Okay. Bye-bye.

(STEVE) Bye.