



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

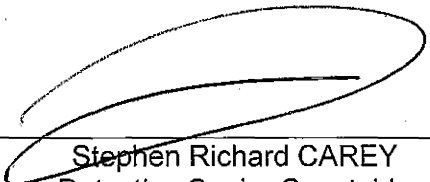
EXHIBIT 79

Statement of Lynda De Lamotte dated 20 May 2020

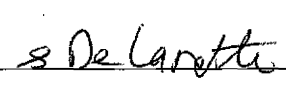
**STATEMENT OF A WITNESS****In the matter of:** Strike Force BAST**Place:** [REDACTED], NSW**Date:** 20 May 2020**Name:** Lynda DE LAMOTTE**STATES:**

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 59 years of age.
3. I am retired. I previously worked in the field of office administration.
4. On the 2nd December 2019, I booked a holiday on Ruby Princess with a company called 'CruiseAway' by Dreamlines. I booked the holiday for my husband Paul DE LAMOTTE and I. This was our eighth cruise. It was our first with Princess. We've been on three P&O and four Carnival cruises. We were first notified by Princess Cruises via SMS on 24 February 2020 that boarding for the Ruby Princess on 8 March 2020 would be staggered, but our boarding time would remain the same around 4 pm time. Times are assigned per deck. Because we were on a high deck ours would be one of the later ones.
5. On the 8th March 2020, Paul and I left our car outside a friend's place in Mascot Sydney, before catching a taxi to the Overseas Passenger Terminal Circular Quay. We received 5 messages from 10.04am to 5.30pm advising us of changes to boarding times. (I still have the messages).
6. Due to myself being in a wheelchair, we were in one of the first groups to board. I recall the time was just after 5.30 pm. Immediately prior to boarding, after passing through customs and

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getting an identification (ID) tag, I saw a female person wearing full hazmat gear standing on the deck of the Ruby Princess. She scanned my tag and waved me on. I remember wondering later why someone would be wearing a foil and white hazmat suit. I saw Paul being scanned by a male person dressed in a uniform with gloves on without a hazmat suit.

7. Other than a few pre-existing medical conditions, we both felt fine. I take medication for asthma, thyroid, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD), blood pressure & depression. I have two spinal problems for which I am awaiting surgery and I need two hip replacements; hence the wheelchair. Paul and I both suffer from Arthritis.
8. Prior to boarding Ruby Princess, my understanding of COVID-19 was what we had seen in the news. We watched all the stories of the cruise ships in quarantine in other countries, and partly expected our cruise to be cancelled. On 25 February 2020, we received notification from our Travel Agent that Princess Cruises were asking if we had travelled through China recently. If we had, we would not be allowed to sail. This would be checked when we boarded. The notification also advised that we would be 'subject to pre-boarding health reporting and enhanced screening at check-in'. This message was repeated on 29 February 2020 by Princess Cruises.
9. On 5 March 2020, Princess Cruises emailed us offers of a cruise credit if we didn't cancel our booking, or free transfer to a future cruise date due to concerns about COVID-19. But the offers were only for sailings from 9 March 2020 onwards. As we were sailing on 8 March 2020 it seemed odd to us to receive this email. By then we were pretty much expecting our cruise to be cancelled, especially as the virus was onboard at least two other Princess Cruises ships.
10. No information relating to COVID-19 was provided to us when we boarded the ship. It all came later on during the cruise. We received no instructions from staff on the ship. All we received was a 'handout' map of the ship which shows the location of the Medical Centre.
11. We were allocated cabin [REDACTED], on Lido Deck, level 15.
12. Our cruise travelled to Fiordland National Park, Dunedin, Akaroa, Wellington, Napier and was turned around before it reached Tauranga, New Zealand. We only disembarked in Dunedin and Napier.
13. In Dunedin, we caught the shuttle bus into town. Paul pushed me around the main shopping streets, and we shopped mainly at souvenir shops. We maybe spent 2 – 3 hours in town.

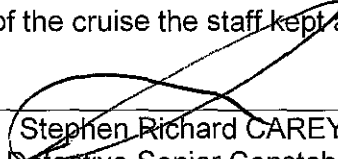
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14. In Napier, we similarly caught the shuttle bus into town. We shopped mostly at mainly souvenir shops and changed some money at a bank. We maybe spent 2 – 3 hours in town.
15. The areas on the ship Paul and I frequented included a restaurant called Michelangelo's, The Buffet Dining; the Pizza and Ice Cream Bars; the casino, several bars, the theatre, shops, guest services and Captains Circle counters and the library.
16. We ate mainly at the Michelangelo restaurant and the buffet dining area. We did also eat in the Explorers Bar and in our cabin. We didn't have a specific table at any eatery and time that we ate. Throughout the cruise we dined with various other passengers at shared tables. We teamed up with various couples to form trivia teams. We also shared tables in bars with other passengers.
17. Some of the staff we commonly spoke to were Will, Clare, and several of the entertainment crew. We got to know Edwin our Cabin Steward too.
18. I came down with a sore throat halfway through the cruise, and after 2 days I went to guest services to enquire whether I should attend the Medical Centre for testing. I was asked if I had any other symptoms of illness, as it was very expensive to attend the clinic and the test wasn't free. The staff member could not tell me the cost but made me feel it was unnecessary to attend the clinic, hence we never did. Other than the sore throat I had for 3 days, neither of us experienced any other symptoms. My sore throat first came on after the ship left Wellington. Paul and I discussed whether I should get off at Napier or not.
19. I first started hearing about COVID-19 mainly through the ships news channels on television. I recall the Captain reminding passengers via the public address system about handwashing, hand sanitation and keeping coughs and sneezes under control. There were several of these announcements made. Notices regarding possible early finish to our cruise as New Zealand had concerns about cruise ships docking, and notices regarding concerns about the virus were left in our cabin. Since returning home Princess Cruises have emailed us a few times telling us that they followed all the rules, gave the inference that the staff are all fine, and a recipe to make us feel connected as part of the Princess Family. It was odd behaviour as by now we were beginning to feel like Princess Cruises had lied to us by omission.
20. Paul and I were not aware of any known cases of COVID-19 on our cruise. All through the latter part of the cruise the staff kept announcing the ship was virus free. Right up to the

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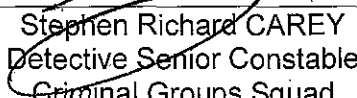
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farewell party on the last night where staff were dancing shoulder to shoulder with passengers.

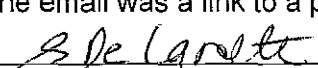
I took virus to mean COVID-19. The staff kept thanking us for making their lives easier by remaining pleasant and not stressing or worrying about COVID-19 whilst onboard.

21. To disembark at the end of the cruise we were assigned to wheelchair disembarkation and met in the Crooners bar. A staff member assisted me off the ship, pushing me through the luggage collection area and the queue to hand over our declaration forms to the Border Force Agent. He then wheeled me up to the taxi rank where he left us.
22. Paul and I caught a taxi back to our car which was parked at Mascot. Our taxi was pulled over by the police for running an orange light, so we advised NSW Public Health after we tested positive, so they could notify the taxi-driver, and the police officer. Once at Mascot, we drove home via Belltrees Cat Retreat at 514 Appin Road Gilead to collect our cat. We advised the staff by phone that we were returning from the Ruby Princess, so the staff member put the cat cage outside whilst we waited in the car. We picked up our cat when the staff member was back indoors.
23. After returning home Paul and I self-isolated in line with the advice of Ruby Princess staff. They stated that the two days travel back to Sydney would form part of the 14-day self-isolation period. This isolation was to start from the day the ship turned around in New Zealand to head back to Australia. Despite having no symptoms, the media were advising that passengers on our Ruby Princess cruise had died from COVID-19, so Paul and I went and got tested just for peace of mind. To both our surprise we both tested positive. There was no treatment for us as we had no symptoms. We self-isolated until cleared by NSW Public Health. I was cleared about 16 days later (4th April 2020). Paul was cleared 17 days later (5th April 2020).
24. We were not temperature tested when we boarded the ship or disembarked. I was hugged by a staff member just as we were disembarking. We were encouraged to hand-sanitise as soon as we boarded, and sanitiser was placed throughout the ship. We had notices left in our cabin regarding the virus, including the one suggesting we, 'try to use your stateroom rather than public toilet facilities.'
25. The day after we got home I rang Princess Cruises and asked if any of the stories in the media about COVID-19 being on Ruby Princess were true. Staff told me words to the effect of, 'We would have to ask Head Office in America and someone will get back to you'. Three days later I received an email reply from an Australian IP address. Within the email was a link to a page

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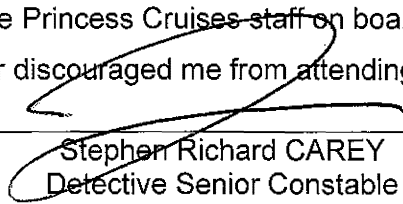

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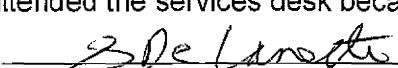
for more information asking that if we experienced any symptoms of COVID-19 to contact health authorities.

26. Once diagnosed COVID-19 positive, we felt bombarded by authorities. We had not even had time to absorb our positive diagnosis when we had two separate health authorities on separate phones at the same time advising different information. By late afternoon I had a minor breakdown as we were getting so much conflicting information from Campbelltown Public Hospital, NSW Public Health Liverpool, and Campbelltown Community Health. Once I recovered and dealt with them all one on one, it became clear that the regulations regarding COVID-19 were changing every day; sometimes more than once a day; and we had to use our common sense. We also received a few emails and SMS messages which appeared to be scams. The first email from Bunker@NSW Health had a link that didn't work, but the phone number was a department within Health NSW who had never heard of 'Bunker' and knew nothing of the email we had received. We became suspicious of all emails, SMS messages and phone calls very quickly, and ignored many of them.
27. The confusion continued when I was cleared from self-isolation on Saturday 4 April 2020. Paul wasn't cleared until the next day. During our period of isolation, we had a visit from two police officers, checking that we were self-isolating. They returned a few days later, after we were cleared. I apologised for their time being wasted but they were very nice about it.
28. Prior to disembarking Ruby Princess, staff advised that we could apply for part-refunds. Staff gave us instructions on how to apply once back home. I filled out the form and sent it, but it kept bouncing back. After three attempts I considered contacting our Travel Agent when Princess Cruises emailed us stating that they will be refunding our full fare, 'in recognition of the effect COVID-19 has had on the community, which has continued with greater consequences than anyone imagined.'
29. Around the 14th May 2020, we received most of our cruise refund from Princess Cruises. I remember the amount being less than we paid. I recall that during the cruise Princess Cruises gave us a \$150 AUD on board cruise credit each for not cancelling our cruise. At the end of the cruise they initially offered us a 25% refund, however we have now been refunded approximately 85% of the cost of our cruise purchase.
30. I feel like Princess Cruises staff on board Ruby Princess lied to us by omission. A female staff member discouraged me from attending the doctor when I attended the services desk because

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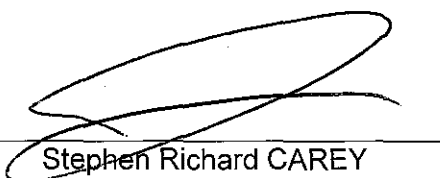

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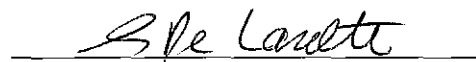
of the prohibitive cost, despite me suffering with a sore throat. The female staff member told me words to the effect of, 'It's very expensive'. When I asked what the cost was, she said, 'I don't know'. If attending the doctor was free, I would have had it done.

31. No masks were provided when we disembarked, and the male who helped me off was not wearing a mask or gloves. I saw a Border Force official had mask and gloves on. I didn't see anyone on board who I thought looked sick, but I did see a few people wandering around with masks on. They appeared to me to Asian passengers. I saw ship staff constantly cleaning during the cruise, constantly wiping down stair rails. I wouldn't call it excessive but more than usual.

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