



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

EXHIBIT 83

Statement of Sharon Schofield dated 6 May 2020

**STATEMENT OF A WITNESS****In the matter of:** Ruby Princess Cruise - 8 March – 19 March 2020.**Place:** State Crime Command**Date:** 6 May 2020**Name:** Sharon SCHOFIELD**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. On Sunday 8 March 2020 I arrived at Sydney Harbour with my husband Allan SCHOFIELD, my daughter Stacie [REDACTED] and her husband Matthew [REDACTED], their children Ryley, Trinity and Sklya [REDACTED], and Matthews parents Maxwell and Angela [REDACTED] to commence our holiday on the Ruby Princess.
4. By this time we had already started to receive text messages that the cruise had been delayed as NSW Health hadn't yet cleared the ship, and they were required to do a full clean, and an inspection was required before they could allow boarding, we were able to drop our bags through the customs area, we had received a number of text messages during the delay.
5. About 7pm we boarded and went to dinner, we felt assured at this time as NSW Health had cleared the ship and they had spent a significant amount of time cleaning. During our time on the cruise, the news had progressively increased on the seriousness of COVID-19 in the community

Witness:


Stacie HUNT


Signature:


Sharon SCHOFIELD


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6. I would say our group as a whole didn't suffer from any major medical conditions; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
7. I stayed in cabin [REDACTED] with my husband Allan SCHOFIELD, my daughter Stacie shared cabin [REDACTED] with her daughters Trinity and Skyla, my son in law Matthew [REDACTED] shared cabin [REDACTED] with his son Ryley [REDACTED] and Angela and Maxwell [REDACTED] stayed in cabin [REDACTED]
8. The rooms were cleaned twice a day, once in the morning and in the evenings. The bathrooms were always wiped down and cleaned thoroughly.
9. We generally had breakfast at the buffet and sat at the table at the back of the ship, we would have lunch at the Crown Grill and when we were by the pool we ate at the "Salty Dog", we would also eat at the Bistro and dining hall for breakfast and lunch; there were hand sanitisers available out the front of the dining rooms, and they did enforce the use of it prior to entering. We had dinner at the 5pm session in the Botticelli dining room, our table number was 18, it was a table of 9 which we shared as a group.
10. The cruise travelled to Dunedin, Akaroa, Wellington and Napier, we did a shore tour of Larnach Castle and Olveston and a historic home tour, we explored other islands but didn't do tours. At all ports we were never temperature tested or required to fill in any health check forms.
11. There appeared to be areas cleaned more regularly on this cruise, especially the dining area and toilets. The use of hand sanitiser was enforced more regularly than other cruises we had been on. The procedures in the buffet were changed after a few days from self-serve to the crew serving, they had closed a number of the buffet stations down, limiting it to only a couple of bays, there was a lot of staff in these areas, as soon as a plate was done with they were onto it and it was taken away.
12. I believe it was the day we arrived in Napier, the news had started to report a lot more on COVID-19 and the Prime Minister Scott MORRISON had announced the closure of borders and returning from international travel, we received some messages and calls from family asking us if we would be returning.

Witness:


Stacie HUNT
12 May 2020


Signature:


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13. That evening there was an announcement that we would be returning to Sydney and would arrive on the 19 March 2020, this was due to government restrictions and borders being closed. They informed us that we should expect delays when returning and not plan to get off before midday due to NSW Health conducting checks.
14. They made another announcement that if anyone felt unwell to attend the medical centre on board, because Angela had the chest infection 3 weeks ago, She went to the medical centre the following morning and showed them her clearance letter from her GP, they were satisfied with that and she didn't feel unwell at the time, so she was allowed to go and never heard anything further from the medical centre.
15. Over the next few days we received a number of documents about isolation when returning home, the cruise provided us with information about washing and sanitising your hands, the bathroom entries had paper towel bins installed so you could use toilet paper to exit without touching handles, a lot of doors were left open so you didn't have to touch them at all, we were regularly reminded not to overfill the lift.
16. At no stage during the cruise did we see anyone that was ill or were told than anyone had been isolated to their room, the ship operated as normal, all the shows and entertainment continued as normal, there was no social distancing. At no stage during the cruise did anyone from our group feel ill and have any reason to go to the medical centre for treatment.
17. We were informed that the ship would be arriving in Sydney about 2am on 19 March 2020, but the exact arrival time is unknown to me. On awaking on the 19th March 2020, the cruise was now in Sydney Harbour, we had breakfast and were told to be at our disembarking point at 7.40am, generally on arriving to your disembarking point you often have to wait many hours before being allowed to disembark, we got there at 7.40am and they said you are right to go off the ship, we walked straight off the ship, found our luggage and through customs and sitting on the shuttle bus by 8.05am, we were surprised and shocked as we were expecting the same delays we experienced boarding with the other cruise getting off, there was no health checks, no masks provided, we didn't see anyone from NSW Health, we had never been off a ship and through customs so quickly.

Witness:


Stacie HUNT
12 May 2020

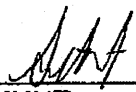
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18. The shuttle bus had our group and an older couple on board, we were all dropped home.
19. On 20 March 2020, we received an email from NSW Health informing us we had been deemed as close contact to confirmed cases of COVID-19 as a result of travelling on the Ruby Princess. I started to get the sniffles, but it progressively got worse and I started to get body aches and pains. My daughter Stacie made a call to the COVID-19 hotline number and received some advice.
20. On 24 March 2020 I went to the COVID-19 clinic at Campbelltown Hospital and got tested, I returned home, as I was still in my 14-day isolation period. The next day, I was notified I had tested positive, I had little to no symptoms by this stage. I was informed my 14-day isolation period stayed the same as symptoms started on day of disembarking. I received daily calls from NSW Health and Stacie was receiving calls every 2-3 days from NSW Health. I was cleared from isolation on 3rd April 2020.
21. On 21st March 2020 Maxwell [REDACTED] went and got tested [REDACTED], after the doctor instructed my daughter Stacie to get all family members tested. At the time he had no symptoms, so the COVID-19 clinic initially refused to test him, they finally agreed to test him.
22. The following day he was notified he had tested positive to COVID-19.
23. On 13 April 2020 I was still unwell, I went back to the COVID-19 clinic at Campbelltown Hospital and was tested, I was again confirmed as positive, I stayed in hospital for 2 days under observation, I was vomiting and had bad body aches.
24. No one else other than myself and Maxwell tested positive for COVID-19.
25. I have since recovered and have been cleared by NSW Health for the past 2 weeks.

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12 May 2020

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