



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

EXHIBIT 90

Statement of Kristy McMahon dated 7 May 2020



STATEMENT OF A WITNESS


In the matter of: M.V Ruby Princess - Passenger (C2) Kristy McMAHON
Place: Strike Force BAST
Date: 07 May 2020

Name: Kristy Ann MCMAHON

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 33 years of age.
3. I have traveled to Europe, Africa and South America amongst other destinations. Previously I have been on a cruise with P&O to the Pacific Islands, with the cruise to New Zealand aboard the Ruby Princess being my second cruise.
4. I had booked to travel on board the Ruby Princess departing Sydney for New Zealand, 8th of March 2020, I was travelling with three friends Dyllan [REDACTED], Alex [REDACTED] and Caleb [REDACTED] we roomed together in cabin number [REDACTED] located on Dolphin deck, level 9.
5. The cruise on board the Ruby Princess was due to depart Sunday 8th March 2020. In the lead up I'd been asked a couple of times by friends if I was still intending to cruise, to which I responded with yes since there were no travel alerts, Princess had not advised of any issues and from memory there were no, or only a couple of confirmed cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Australia. On February 24th, 2020, we received our first communication from Princess in regards to the threat of COVID-19. The email advised that Princess were monitoring the situation and that as a precaution anyone that had traveled through or from mainland China, Macau or Hong Kong or had contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 within 14 days of the start of the cruise would not be allowed to board and would receive a full refund.

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We were also advised in this email that we would be subject to pre-boarding health reporting and enhanced screening at check-in. This communication from Princess helped to ease any small concerns I did have about boarding. It seemed as though they were well advised and prepared. Another of these emails with the same advice was also received on the 28th February 2020.

6. My boyfriend lives in Penrith, and as such I caught a train from Broadmeadow station to Strathfield, and Strathfield to Penrith station on Friday evening 6th March 2020. During this journey, I received an email from Princess Cruises advising that they were continuing to implement increased monitoring, screening and sanitation protocols to protect the health of guests, crew and residents of destinations. They also advised that there were some policy updates that provided options and flexibility should anyone want to reschedule. The email advised that sailings departing between 9th March and 3rd April could be cancelled up to 3 days prior to departure and Future Cruise Credit for 100% of the cancellation fee would be provided as well as being able to move the booking to a cruise that departed by December 31st. If you continued to cruise from the 9th March Princess were offering \$300 cabin credit. Since my cruise was on the 8th March (before the 9th) and it was within the 3 days prior to boarding I essentially ignored this email and was further comforted that Princess were not concerned with my particular departure and that extra steps were being taken to ensure my safety. A further email was then received Saturday 7th March the exact same as the one received the previous evening, except the cruise date eligible for cancellation/on board credit was changed to the 6th March instead of 9th March. This now applied to the date of my cruise, however it was still advised that this could only be done up to 3 days prior to departure, so still did not apply to me since it was then just over 24hrs before departure. I felt reassured again.
7. The boarding time for our cabin [REDACTED] on the Dolphin deck was advised previously as being from 4pm in the afternoon. The morning of Sunday 8th (day of departure) at 10am I received a text message from Princess Cruises advising that disembarkation for Ruby Princess from the previous cruise had been delayed and therefore embarkation for my cruise would be delayed and to not arrive at the terminal before 1pm. A further text was received advising embarkation had been further delayed and would not commence until 5pm. In yet another text message received at midday on Sunday 8th, I was advised that check-in was as per allocated progressive time (from 4pm) but that we would be asked to leave the terminal and return after

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5pm for embarkation. I was a little worried by these messages at first and was surprised that a previous cruise had only just arrived that morning and that turnaround was so quick between cruises but assumed this was normal process and that the previous cruise just got in late.

8. I caught a train from Penrith to Central, then Central to Circular Quay and met up with my 3 friends, Dyllan [REDACTED], Alex [REDACTED], Caleb [REDACTED] that were staying in the same cabin near where the ship was docked at around 3.30pm. At the time there were a lot of people sitting and standing around the Quay obviously waiting to board as they only had hand luggage. We were quite shocked at just how many people. We lined up and were given luggage tags, dropped off our bags, and were given a form to fill out in terms of our health and where we had been. From memory it asked if we had symptoms/had been or travelled from China, Macau or Hong Kong or been in contact with any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19, to which my group all responded no and signed the document. We then lined up to show our passport and hand in this document. At this time, we did see some people being directed to another area which we suspected was for those that had reported illness etc on their form. We then left the terminal as per advice from staff to wait to board. I remember thinking it was strange they just accepted what we'd written on our health forms and not done any further checks or asked questions. I thought perhaps when we boarded they might do temperature checks or something.
9. After sitting around on the grass at the Quay for a while with everyone else, there was no where else to sit as there were people everywhere, we received a text message from Ruby Princess just after 5pm advising they had yet to be given approval to embark by NSW Public Health, and we were encouraged to leave the terminal to have dinner locally in the area.
10. Myself and my friends walked to a nearby pub to get something to eat. Whilst ordering and eating (and noticing other passengers doing the same) we discussed the delay and what it could mean and if we should be worried. I was of the opinion that if there was any real risk they would be canceling the cruise. We discussed what it would be like to have to go to work the following day instead of on a holiday but that if that was the case it would be for the best. We came to the conclusion that perhaps extra cleaning was being carried out to ensure safety at the direction of NSW Public Health. Since no further information as to the reason for the delay was provided, this made sense.

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11. We received a further text message that the Ruby Princess had been given clearance to commence embarkation, at which time we felt very relieved, but that the outside area was so congested they asked guests who had checked in to leave and enjoy the surrounding area as Customs and Security will take time and patience to board all guests. It was at this point I thought boarding would take a long time whilst they did more stringent health checks. We were advised we could return and be onboard by 9pm, and that revised sail time was now 10pm. From memory we waited in the pub even longer and started walking back to the terminal at about 730pm. There was still a long line up, and after waiting some time we were directed into another line that was much quicker. We went through security and were on board within around ½ hour after this. We were all very excited about how quickly we got through and to finally be on board, no further health checks were done.
12. Over the next couple of days we enjoyed our cruise, laying on the deck at the back watching the ocean go by, sitting in the spa and chatting to other guests since it was a little too chilly to swim in the pool, eating at the buffet for breakfast and lunch and then a 3 course meal in the restaurant at night. We joked about how full after each meal we would get and yet couldn't stop eating! At night we would watch a show and go to the casino to play the claw machine and a bit of Blackjack. We all worked out which our favorite cocktails were on the menu. The outside areas weren't too busy at the start of the cruise since it was a little cool, however once docking in New Zealand it was a little warmer in the afternoons once back on board each day and people would lounge in chairs etc with a drink after a days sightseeing.
- 13.
14. We visited Dunedin on the 12th March, and Akaroa on the 13th March before becoming aware of an announcement by Princess Cruises online that it was pausing global operations affecting trips from March 12 to May 10. We were told via speaker announcement on board that an update would be provided for us. We found on a website that the Ruby Princess was scheduled to continue. We were told on the evening of March 13th via speaker announcement that the Ruby would continue as usual. We sailed on and went ashore in Wellington on March 14th. That afternoon we became aware from the media, friends and family of the New Zealand government advising that anyone entering would need to isolate for 14 days from midnight Sunday 15th. By this time Princess had not advised any of this, and I was getting worried and

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stressed. I had friends and family messaging me worried and asking what was happening and I didn't even know. There were large line ups at the information desk, and each time we managed to speak to someone we were advised we'd be told once information was available. During this time my mum was messaging me and advising that panic buying had hit supermarkets back home and New Zealanders were scrambling to get home. We still didn't know what was going on. We arrived in Napier and went ashore on March 15th with no further information from Princess. Once arriving back on board that evening, we found news reports online that Australia was following New Zealand in terms of isolation being a requirement if entering Australia past midnight Sunday 15th. At this point I was really worried about what this would mean and the fact that we hadn't been provided with any information or updates from Princess. My mother was distressed when I advised we still didn't know what was happening and questioned who was making the decisions for the cruise. I advised I actually wasn't sure. After lining up with a lot of other people at the information desk on board again we were told we were continuing on as normal and also disembarking as per normal once back in Sydney. We felt relieved at this, but worried that this seemed to contradict what both New Zealand and Australian governments were saying.

15. Later that night we received our on board newsletter as per usual, with activities available for the following day and information in regards to shore excursions and timings for docking in the next port. This further solidified the idea that we were continuing on and that everything was ok, and I felt more settled and enjoyed my time on board again after advising family and friends. It was at this time I was made aware by my mother that there were reports of the Golden Princess cruise ship being docked off the South Coast of New Zealand somewhere with suspected COVID-19 cases on board. At this point I became very worried, what were the chances their ship had cases and ours didn't? I calmed myself down by telling myself I hadn't observed anyone sick or heard of anyone being sick or in isolation, and Princess hadn't said anything so we must be ok.
16. Later that evening whilst in bed, we received a speaker announcement that we were turning around and heading straight for Sydney at the request of the Australian Government. When I advised my mum that we were returning she mentioned the issue that we'd have to self isolate unless we were back by midnight, I said I was hopeful we wouldn't have to do this since we were returning when requested. I was beginning to get worried and stressed about having to do

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this since I was due back at my fulltime job as a supervisor, my 2IC was due to finish with the company the day I returned to work, and I had no leave left having used it all for this holiday and previous occasions being sick. I contacted my boss to advise her what was happening.

17. Now that we knew we were returning home, I tried to enjoy the rest of the cruise as best I could, knowing things may be difficult when we get back home. My mum was busy trying to get some toilet paper and other essential items for us when we returned due to the panic buying. We had started to notice some differences on board however in the last 4 days or so. You could no longer serve yourself at the buffet, the staff had to do it for you. We joked that they didn't put much on your plate when you asked for what you wanted, and had to ask for more all the time. We also noticed a sign at the bars saying that you could no longer use your Princess keep cup for beverage fills due to hygiene reasons. There were also staff around with buckets of soapy water constantly wiping down banisters and handles. I was reassured and thought that extra precautions were just being taken.
18. We were not advised further details until Tuesday 17th March. We were told that we would be docking in Sydney Thursday morning and would have to isolate for 14 days since our last port which would be until Monday 30th. We were advised we could still get public transport home, and they requested that anyone with flu/cold like symptoms should present to medical. This was the last we heard on the issue apart from flyers from Customs being delivered to our room and information being provided on disembarkation.
19. On the morning of disembarkation (Thursday 19th March) we heard the announcement that we had been cleared to disembark and we went to get breakfast from the buffet as we were in one of later designated groups. We noticed that we were allowed to serve ourselves this time and I joked about eating as much as we could since none of us had much food at home. We went to our disembarkation area about ½ hour to an hour early since there wasn't much else to do on board by this point and were advised they were ahead of schedule and we could disembark straight away. We walked straight off past a line of staff and crew waving us goodbye, collected our suitcases, were given a flyer by customs on the isolation rules and walked straight out of the terminal. We were very surprised it was so quick and easy, I was uneasy that there weren't any medical checks or anything. I thought they'd at least be doing temperature checks, and although feeling a little uneasy I felt slightly re-assured that there mustn't be any sick people on

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board. Dyllan [REDACTED] and myself left Caleb [REDACTED] and Alex [REDACTED] at the taxi line and proceeded to the train station at Circular Quay, caught this to Central, then got a train to Adamstown station. We were then picked up by an Uber and we returned to our house (we're roommates and friends). We noted on the flyer received by customs that the 14 day isolation period was from that day, not the last port as previously thought. I contacted my work and family to advise.

20. The following day I received a text message from NSW Health at midday advising that there were several confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Ruby Princess. I was advised to isolate as previously advised and phone Health Direct if I developed symptoms. I was shocked. I didn't even know there were sick people on board, let alone that they'd been tested and potentially suspected of having COVID-19. I was also shocked that these cases had been confirmed so quickly. I immediately thought they must have known there were at least suspected cases on board. Why weren't we told? From this time on I was very anxious and worried about contracting the disease. Would I get it? Would I die? What about the public transport we had used? I was worried as were my family and friends when they found out.
21. My room mate had developed symptoms and went to get tested on Friday 20th March. We then awaited the results. I began to suffer from symptoms from Wednesday 25th March, including a sore throat, dry cough, diarrhea, fatigue and a headache. As a precaution I went to get tested on Friday 27th March. The following day I tried to do some exercise on my elliptical machine since the symptoms were only mild and suffered shortness of breath. I stopped the exercise and sat for a while until it subsided. For a while I thought I was going to have to alert my room mate, it was a scary feeling, not being able to get enough breath and having your heart beat out of your chest. It was at this point I strongly suspected I had COVID-19.
22. During this time in isolation I was not being paid. I had no leave with work, and they were refusing to allow me to work from home. There were many back and forth emails with them, and at one point I felt the need to escalate to the State Manager and also get advice from Fair Work. My employer was not cooperating and I was having to decide whether to lodge a complaint with Fair Work which was extremely stressful. I was also trying all day every day to contact Centrelink to find out if I qualified for any kind of assistance payment. I missed my boyfriend, family and friends severely, was relying on my parents who are in their 60's to go shopping and drive ½ hour each way to drop off basic food supplies. I suffer from anxiety and

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depression and am medicated for these, but self isolation and not being able to earn money along with the stress of potentially contracting COVID-19 was taking a huge toll. I was spending more and more time in bed sleeping and not eating properly.

23. On Monday 23rd March the call came that I had tested positive for COVID-19. I cried. I was only suffering from mild symptoms, but what if they got worse? Had I passed it onto others through the public transport? What about the Uber driver? Was he and his family ok? I answered all of the questions from the Public Health Unit on my symptoms, my travel and who I'd been in contact with. I was then told my isolation was to be extended until at least Sunday 5th April. This was distressing, I was due to return to work Friday 3rd to start earning money again and also to see my boyfriend whom I hadn't seen since March 8th.
24. I was advised that I would receive a call at least every second day checking up on me, and confirmation of the end of my isolation would eventually be provided in line with my symptoms and their resolution. I did not receive any calls. After a couple of days, I phoned the COVID hotline, and was told I would need to speak to someone where I was tested. I phoned John Hunter Hospital, and was advised I'd need to speak to the Public Health Unit. They put me through but it just went back to the hotline. I obtained the phone number for the Public Health Unit, and once again it would just go through to the hotline who couldn't help me. This went on for days and many hours of me explaining my situation over and over again. I was so stressed about when I would be able to leave the house and go back to work. Multiple times a day my parents and friends would phone to check how I was doing and I that I wasn't getting worse. I was angry that my family and friends were being put through this also.
25. I finally managed to get onto someone from the Public Health Unit, who advised that I would get released Sunday 5th April and someone would phone me. By Sunday evening I hadn't received a call, and followed up. I was asked to be patient. I received the call about 8pm, and a subsequent release email following that. I forwarded this to my employer, at which point the State Manager phoned me and asked me not to come to work Monday 6th or Tuesday 7th. They wanted the Health, Safety and Environment team to have time to review the release letter and make sure they were happy with it. This was disappointing and depressing, I was looking forward to going back to work. On Monday 6th I was advised by my employer not to return until Tuesday 14th after Easter. They were worried about the other staff and that they may be

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exposed and wanted to give it an extra week. I felt sad and ostracized even more than I already was.

26. Once I was able to leave the house I struggled to adjust. I hadn't been in 'society' since the few days in New Zealand up to the 15th March. When I left on the cruise there were none or few cases in Australia and that was all that was happening. So much had changed. Social distancing, wiping down surfaces, packing your own bags in supermarkets, not being able to use my keep cup at the coffee shop. All of this I had to learn immediately as I went, with some angry and frustrated looks and comments from staff and members of the public who had been doing this for weeks.
27. The few people I disclosed to that I'd contracted and recovered from COVID-19 would take a step back and look at me differently. The first few days at work staff kept their distance more than they needed to and barely spoke to me. I felt tainted and that I'd done something wrong. People questioned why I chose to still go. Many people had questions about it all and asked how I got home. I suffer from guilt over catching public transport home and potentially spreading the disease.
28. I'm angry that we were not provided with the option of moving our cruise date along with all of the other departures before leaving. If this was the case, I would have taken this as a sign that the option should be taken and there was a real possibility I shouldn't be going on this cruise.
29. I'm angry that we were not advised of what I now know, that at a minimum there were a lot of sick passengers disembarking the cruise the morning we were getting on the same ship. If I had have known this I would absolutely not have gone on the cruise and contacted the company to demand a reschedule.
30. I'm angry and upset that we were not advised there were sick people on board our cruise, let alone suspected cases and that people had been tested for COVID-19. I'm angry that I've now found out there were people in isolation on board towards the end, and that I was not even given the option to choose to isolate in the cabin to reduce my risk.
31. I'm angry that we were told it was fine to catch public transport home, and we were not told it was a real risk we had contracted COVID-19 and could pass it on. If I had have known this I would have made alternative arrangements for isolation. I was not given the information

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required for me to make the right choice. I suffer from guilt daily from the idea that I've probably spread this to multiple people. How many were there? Did any of them not survive? Did any of them pass it on to someone else unknowingly and they didn't survive, so now they have the guilt also?

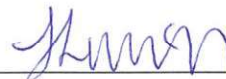
32. The risk I was exposed to, and my subsequent contraction of COVID-19 has impacted me mentally, physically and financially and continues to do so.

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