



Special Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess

# EXHIBIT 97

Statement of Sergeant Gerard Hollands dated 12 April 2020



## STATEMENT OF POLICE

**In the matter of:** Ruby Princess  
**Place:** Sydney Water Police - Marine Area Command  
**Date:** 12 April 2020

**Name:** Gerard Hollands **Tel. No:** 9320 7499  
**Rank:** Sergeant  
**Station/Unit:** Sydney Water Police – Marine Area Command

## 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 41 years of age.
3. At 1900 on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, I was rostered on as the shift supervisor of the Sydney Water Police – Marine Area Command. I was rostered on this shift with Senior Constables [REDACTED] and BUTTLER.
4. About 2130 on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Senior Constable BUTTLER approached me and had a conversation. He stated that approximately ten (10) minutes earlier, he had received a phone call from the NSW Ambulance Service requesting the contact number of Sydney Ports. He further explained NSW Ambulance had received a request for ambulances to assist in removing and treating passengers from an inbound cruise ship that were suspected of having COVID-19. S/CST [REDACTED] also heard this conversation with S/CST BUTTLER.
5. As a result, myself and S/CST [REDACTED] attended the Search and Rescue room (SAR) of Sydney Water Police, where I watched S/CST [REDACTED] make a phone call to Sydney Ports. Once he completed this call, he informed me that Sydney Ports were contacted by someone

Witness:

*[Signature]*  
S/Constable  
Erin RABLEY

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Signature:

*[Signature]*  
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stating to be from the Ambulance Service. They had began asking questions around incoming cruise ships and that one may have two (2) persons on board infected with COVID-19. S/CST [REDACTED] further informed me that there were concerns as to the legitimacy and validity of the call as the caller to Sydney Ports was vague with information. S/CST [REDACTED] informed me he would make some further enquiries around the call. Shortly after this, I received a call from "Cameron" the Harbour Master at Ports, asking if we had any further information. I cannot recall the entirety of this phone call, however I explained that we were still making enquires.

"Cameron" again stated that he was concerned as to the legitimacy of the call as any request for a "MEDIVAC" from a ship is arranged through different channels. At some point around this time, I was informed that Sydney Ports were having issues raising anyone from NSW Health and that the contact numbers they had, were ringing out. I am unsure where exactly this information came from. I monitored and observed S/CST [REDACTED] as he began to make numerous enquires including conducting checks on supplied phone numbers and subsequent persons linked to those numbers through the COPS system.

6. At this stage, I contacted the On-Call Inspector of the Marine Area Command, Inspector Todd CUNNINGHAM. I informed him of the issue and that we were trying to confirm all information, both the legitimacy of the call and also the legitimacy around the information pertaining to COVID-19. INSP CUNNINGHAM informed me that this matter was one for NSW Health and that we were not the "Combat Agency". He further reiterated that NSW Health were the "Combat Agency" for any COVID-19 issues and that Ports should have contact numbers for NSW Health. I informed him that Sydney Ports were having issues raising anyone from NSW Health and asked if we had a number we could provide them with. I was again informed that Sydney Ports should have their own contact numbers. I then finished the call with INSP CUNNINGHAM.
7. I informed S/CST [REDACTED] of the result of the call with INSP CUNNINGHAM and he informed me of the results of his enquiries. He explained that he had spoken to the NSW Ambulance Service and confirmed that a Peter DILLONARDO or similar was the Senior Control Officer at the NSW Ambulance control Centre and was the person who had called Ports. S/CST [REDACTED] explained that DILLONARDO had received a call from an alleged shipping agent by

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Erin RAPLEY

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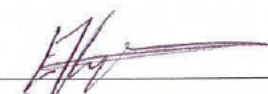


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the name of "BIBI". "BIBI" had requested two ambulances to convey two passengers off a cruise ship that were suspected of having COVID-19 and that two beds had been booked at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Around this time, I watched as S/CST [REDACTED] made a call to Sydney Ports. It was during this conversation that "Cameron" confirmed that "BIBI" was indeed a shipping agent for Carnival Cruises and that the "RUBY PRINCESS" was due into Sydney Ports at 0230 and was the vessel requiring assistance.


8. I then received a call from a female by the name of "WENDY" who stated she was also from Ports. I cannot recall this conversation in its entirety; however, "Wendy" was seeking some information and guidance in regards to the coordination of the matter. I explained to her that unfortunately we as Police, were unable to assist directly and that Ports needed to deal with the matter by liaising with NSW Health. I also explained to her, that we were trying to obtain a contact number for NSW Health for them.
9. After this S/CST [REDACTED] informed me that he was going to ring the Duty Operations Inspector (DOI) at Police radio VKG to see if they had any contact numbers for NSW Health. After this conversation with the DOI, S/CST [REDACTED] explained to me that the DOI had no direct number for NSW Health and that he had informed us to "Google" one. Around this time, I monitored and observed S/CST [REDACTED] make numerous attempts to contact "BIBI", all to no avail. He also received an email from DILLANARDO with a "1-800" number for NSW Health
10. At this point, from monitoring S/CST [REDACTED] enquiries, it became apparent to me that the matter was becoming convoluted and all attempts to contact NSW Health were becoming futile. As I result, I decided that I would contact Australian Border Force (ABF) to see if they were aware of the situation. Upon calling an "after hours" number, I spoke to a Karel JENICEK from Home Affairs. I asked if he knew if his agency was aware of the potential issue with the RUBY PRINCESS. He requested that I send him an email with all the information so that he could make his own enquiries.
11. Around this point, S/CST [REDACTED] updated me with information from Sydney Ports. I was informed that Sydney Ports had spoken to the Carnival Australia CEO and he had informed them that he was unaware of anyone having COVID-19 onboard the RUBY PRINCESS. He

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believed that some persons had been tested in New Zealand and were awaiting test results and that another two (2) people were suffering from ear infections. These persons were the ones requiring medical assistance. I was informed that based on this information, the vessel's booking may be accepted. It was apparent to me that there was some miscommunication between agencies. At 0019 on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, I sent JENICEK an email and included the updated information. I requested ABF contact Sydney Ports directly to avoid any further miscommunication.


12. At 0034 on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, I received an email reply from JENICEK stating that he had been in touch with Sydney Ports. Around this time, I observed S/CST [REDACTED] contact the NSW Ambulance Control Centre and requested them to play back the phone call they received from "BIBI", to ascertain exactly what was stated in the initial request. A short time later, S/CST [REDACTED] received a call from NSW Ambulance who stated to him that "BIBI" had stated "...Two (2) persons with suspected COVID-19 required ambulances"
13. At 00:40 on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, I sent INSP CUNNIGHAM a text message updating him on the incident.
14. At this point, I believed that we, S/CST [REDACTED] and I, had become a conduit for other agencies and that we were now simply relaying messages between the agencies. I instructed S/CST [REDACTED] to pass on any numbers we had for NSW Health onto Sydney Ports and that we, as Police, were to remove ourselves from the situation to allow the other agencies to communicate direct. I then began resuming normal supervisor duties, however continued to monitor any updates or calls we received in relation to the RUBY PRINCESS.
15. Around 0200, S/CST [REDACTED] informed me that he had rung the "1-800" number for NSW Health and had spoken to a female supervisor and that she was unaware of the situation and that the number was simply a public advice number. S/CST [REDACTED] also informed me that he had spoken to "Cameron" from Ports and that the ABF were going to quarantine the vessel at the Overseas Passenger Terminal – OPT. At 02:19 on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020, I then sent INSP CUNNINGHAM a second text message with the updated information. After this, we had no further part or involvement in the incident and we resumed normal duties

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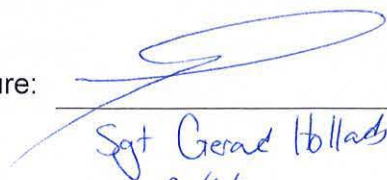


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