

WITNESS STATEMENT OF**KATE HYSLOP AND RICKY SINGH**

I, Kate Hyslop, make this statement with my partner Ricky Singh, and I, Ricky Singh make this statement with my partner Kate Hyslop. We make this statement together, on the basis of our own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. We say as follows:

- 1 This statement is about our personal experience in Victoria's COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program (**Quarantine**). We entered Quarantine at the Crown Metropol on 11 April 2020 and exited on 25 April 2020.
- 2 We came to be in Quarantine as we had both recently finished studying for our real estate licences in New Zealand and decided to return to Australia to live. Kate had previously lived in Australia for one and a half years before returning to New Zealand in November 2019 to pursue her studies. Ricky also travelled to New Zealand in November 2019, after having lived in Australia since 2016.
- 3 We arrived into Melbourne on 11 April 2020 and were quarantined that same day.

Entering Quarantine

- 4 We knew about the Quarantine program, as we had conducted research on what to expect prior to leaving New Zealand, however we didn't really know how it would operate.
- 5 When we arrived in Melbourne, we were directed to a hallway in the airport where two nurses were conducting temperature checks. While waiting in line for our temperature checks, we were provided masks and instructed to wear them. The nurses took our temperatures. We were briefly asked whether we had any symptoms. We were then guided by security and police to a section of the airport where the Quarantine arrangements were being co-ordinated. We noticed that only some of the security staff and police officers who were coordinating the flow of returned travellers were wearing masks. When we reached the area of the airport responsible for co-ordinating Quarantine arrangements, we were asked certain questions, such as whether we wanted to be quarantined individually or together. Security advised that we would be quarantined at the Crown Metropol. From here, we went to the baggage claim area to pick up our luggage and boarded a bus to the hotel. We carried our own luggage with us until we reached the hotel. On the bus, there was no social distancing observed between passengers, but we were required to wear our masks.
- 6 When we arrived at the hotel, we took our bags off the bus and laid them down in the lobby. We noticed that not all security guards at the hotel were wearing PPE – probably about 50/50. At the hotel we were asked some basic questions about whether we were experiencing symptoms and

whether we had any dietary requirements. We also received a suite of documents containing some basic information about our Quarantine, including:

- (a) A letter from DHHS which outlined that we were not to leave our rooms, that we would receive a call once a day from a nurse (who could administer medication, if needed) and that we could contact DHHS if we had any questions. The letter contained a contact number for people to call, if they started to experience symptoms;
- (b) A letter from the hotel containing the numbers to call if we needed anything, like sheets; and
- (c) A letter about Woolworths deliveries, for which quarantined passengers could receive free express delivery for non-perishable items.

7 Once checked in, the hotel staff assisted us to take our bags to our room via an elevator. The hotel staff carrying our bags were not wearing masks or gloves and there was no social distancing in the elevator.

8 It was a quick process overall. It only took about 2 hours from disembarking at the airport to entering our hotel room. However, I recall that we went from about 10.30am to 7.30pm without a meal that day. We ate breakfast before we boarded the plane in Auckland, at about 10.30am. When we arrived in Melbourne at about midday, we were provided a small snack pack of chocolate and biscuits at the airport. We were not offered a lunchtime meal when we arrived at the hotel and received our first meal at the hotel at about 7.30pm that evening.

During Quarantine

9 During Quarantine we never left our room. We did not have a fresh air break during the fourteen days, nor were we told that we were allowed to have fresh air breaks. We had no interactions with security guards or staff, outside our interactions with nurses. We received daily check-up phone calls from three nurses who asked about our physical and mental state. A nurse came to our room on two occasions to administer medication.

10 On the first occasion (three days into Quarantine), the nurse was required to enter our room to administer an injection. She was wearing a surgical mask, gloves, a full gown, and a visor. On the second occasion (approximately seven days into Quarantine), the nurse provided medication at the door for a skin condition that Kate had developed – possibly due to the recirculated air. The nurse kept a distance of 2 metres from the door at all times. At no time during Quarantine did we exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. We were not offered a COVID-19 test, and we were not tested prior to exiting Quarantine. It wasn't until near the end of Quarantine that we found out (possibly via Facebook) that we were able to request a test.

- 11 Regarding our meals, they were left at our door three times a day. There was one time where we had only one meal delivered for dinner. Despite calling to advise the hotel, the second meal didn't arrive. It was only on our second last day that we discovered that we could order food through Uber Eats. We felt that we weren't really informed about what was going on or about any procedural changes as they occurred. We made one order through Uber Eats near the end of our stay, and two orders through Woolworths online, one in the first week, and one in the second week. Uber Eats and Woolworths delivered our orders to the hotel lobby and a hotel staff member then delivered them to our room. They knocked on our door to advise that the order had arrived and left it at our door for us to collect. At least once a day, we were not notified when our meals had arrived, so we were constantly having to check outside our door to see when our food had arrived. No-one ever directly handed our meals or orders to us.
- 12 When we would open the door to collect our meals, we would sometimes have a quick look around the corridor. Generally (maybe seven times out of ten), there was a single security guard in the corridor. We observed security guards with their headphones in, and occasionally we would see two security guards having a chat. They were not always standing an appropriate distance apart and we never saw the security guards who were monitoring our corridors wearing PPE. We also never saw more than two security guards on our floor, despite that we had heard that some floors had three or four security guards.

Access to information about Quarantine

- 13 Before we returned to Australia, we researched Quarantine on Facebook to understand what to expect. Facebook became a key source of information for us, because it was hard to get information from the staff. On Facebook, we recall having seen videos of security guards in the Quarantine hotels lying on the floor. At one point, Kate had joined approximately five Facebook groups, including:
- (a) "Australians in Quarantine Facilities";
 - (b) "Hotel Quarantine Australia";
 - (c) "Crown Metropol Melbourne Quarantine/Isolation"; and
 - (d) "Rate my plate Australian Hotel Quarantine Food".

Leaving Quarantine

- 14 Two days before the end of our fourteen-day Quarantine period, we received a letter advising us that we would be released at about lunchtime on 25 April 2020. DHHS organised the release times based on people's onward travel arrangements. Those with a longer onward journey were generally able to leave earlier in the day than those with shorter distances to travel. We had initially informed

DHHS that our destination after Quarantine was in northern Victoria, however, during Quarantine, we changed our plans and decided to drive to Queensland on the day of our departure. The day before our release, we called to advise DHHS of our change in plans and asked if we could be released earlier, due to our long drive. DHHS agreed to release us at 9:30am on 25 April 2020.

- 15 On the day of our release, hotel staff took our bags to the lobby and put them in a taxi for us. We were not asked to wear PPE when leaving our room, nor in the lobby. It wasn't really offered to us, even if we'd wanted it. We had kept our masks from the day that we'd left the airport in case we needed them, but we didn't wear them as we left. Before our release, a nurse asked about how we were feeling, but did not check our temperatures or offer us a COVID-19 test. The taxi took us to a suburb in north eastern Melbourne where we picked up our car and drove to our next destination. The taxi driver who transported us from the hotel was not wearing PPE but had the standard plastic screen around the driver's chair, which is often seen in taxis.

Aspects of our stay which caused us concern

- 16 We were concerned by the lack of safety precautions, especially in the hotel lobby, while waiting for our entry and release to be arranged.
- 17 We had often wondered about whether the people preparing and delivering our food were taking the necessary precautions to prevent transmission.
- 18 We had heard rumours (possibly from Facebook and directly from a security guard himself as shown on the 60 minutes episode) about multiple security guards going to KFC for lunch, and so were worried about any potential transmission in these environments being brought back to Hotel Quarantine.

Signature



Print name KATE HYSLOP

Date 13/8/2020

Signature



Print name RICKY SINGH

Date 13/8/2020