

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]

I, [REDACTED] make this statement, on the basis of my knowledge, save where otherwise states. I say as follows:

- 1 This statement is about my experience working as a security guard at two hotels that were participating in Melbourne's COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program.
- 2 I worked at the Crowne Plaza from 9 April 2020 to 19 April 2020 as a floor supervisor on the night shift.
- 3 I worked at the Pullman Hotel between 28 May 2020 and the 4 July 2020 as a floor supervisor on the night shift.

Recruitment, duties and escalation

- 4 In late March 2020, I had been working as a security guard at the Grand Prix in Melbourne. I was told by a colleague at the Grand Prix that there could be work in the quarantine hotels. My colleague said I should call the operations manager at Nuforce Security Group (**Nuforce**), I think his name was [REDACTED]. I called [REDACTED] on 29 March 2020.
- 5 On 3 April 2020 I got a text message from [REDACTED] with a roster for the following week.
- 6 On 9 April 2020 I started my first shift at Crowne Plaza, working for Nuforce under the banner of Wilson Security (**Wilson**). I was rostered on as the floor supervisor.
- 7 At the Crowne Plaza the chain of command was the floor guards who reported to the floor supervisor, the floor supervisor would report to the shift supervisor and if there was a more serious incident, the shift supervisor would go up to the guest's room with someone from Department of Health and Human Services (**DHHS**) and a mental health nurse or general nurse.
- 8 The floors of the Crowne Plaza are semicircular with the lifts in the middle of the semi-circle. There are about 20 rooms on each side of the lifts. There were guards at each end of the corridors and another guard at the lift. The guards at each end would walk up and down past the rooms, they would look out for noises from the rooms or in the stairwells.
- 9 At the Pullman Hotel there were 13 floors. The first guards to arrive for their shift would be on the top floors and the last would be on the lower floors. There were two guards per floor. At the start of their shifts the supervisor would brief them. The brief included the shift supervisor doing a health check (Do you have any flu-like symptoms, shortness of breath, fever, aches and pains, any pre-existing conditions etc.) For every shift this information was recorded for each guard working.

- 10 My role as a floor supervisor included checking on the guards, giving them breaks, water, and ensuring they had their PPE. I would also move between the floors to make sure the guards were not on their phones or asleep. I would also perform health checks again for my floor staff. All my shifts were night shifts, from 6pm to 6am.
- 11 If there were major incidents, I would escalate this to the shift supervisor who would then get DHHS involved if they needed to.
- 12 Sometimes the shift supervisor would manage an incident without DHHS, for example if someone was suspected of being in the stairwell. This was rare, and it was always a guard, not a patron.
- 13 If there was an incident involving a guest, the shift supervisor would get someone from DHHS.

Training and induction

- 14 I started my first shift 30 minutes early for an induction and training session. It is common practice for security guards to arrive half an hour early before their shift starts to do training or receive information about a shift. On my first day at the Crowne Plaza we went through use of personal protective equipment (**PPE**), policies about keeping your distance from other people, and the processes for escalating incidents.
- 15 The training we got for PPE was about wearing masks and gloves. We were shown how to put the mask on, there was hand sanitiser in multiple locations on each floor and we were told to use that as much as we wanted. We were also told to stay 4 metres from the guests and that there was a maximum of three people in the lift. I never saw any guards not wearing their masks properly.
- 16 There were some printouts around the hotel that had information about wearing PPE and social distancing, and protocols for what to do if someone came out of their room. We were not allowed to make any physical contact with the guests if they came out of their rooms and would escalate this to the shift supervisor. The printouts were up on the walls of each floor and in the area where we had breaks and food. But we were never given anything to hold on to, there was no handbook.
- 17 On the first floor at the Crowne Plaza there were COVID-19 positive guests. On that floor the security guards wore masks and gloves and had hand sanitiser. On the other floors the guards would just wear masks. Sometimes guards wouldn't wear masks on the floor because they were rarely in contact with the guests.
- 18 On the whole, I would say the training was sufficient. At the Pullman Hotel and Crowne the guards would be briefed at the start of each shift and at the Pullman

guards were asked whether they had worked at other hotels, and at both hotels you were asked whether you had symptoms and whether you had a temperature.

- 19 In the last couple of weeks that I was at the Pullman Hotel they started taking our temperature and recording it at the Swanston Street entrance. During the brief they would also reinforce all the rules and protocols; don't go near the guests, call the supervisor if you need to, always use hand sanitiser and that only 10 people could be in the sign-on room for their shift at a time to keep numbers in the same space down.
- 20 The rules on social distancing and hand sanitiser were constantly reiterated. This was done by the Wilson supervisor, and shift supervisor, who managed the Crowne and Pullman guards.
- 21 I observed that the training given by Wilson was pretty good and was pleasantly surprised by the professionalism of Wilson and Nuforce.

COVID testing

- 22 We weren't told much about how frequently guests were being tested for COVID-19. My understanding was that at the Pullman Hotel all the guests were clean, although the adjacent hotel, the Mercure, had some guests who had tested positive.
- 23 In my last week at the Pullman Hotel we were told the guests were tested three times; on arrival, midway during their quarantine period, and before they left.
- 24 Later on in June, I was told that if guests refused to be tested, they could be detained for another 14 days. I understood and assumed it was par for the course that all guests were tested, except a few that refused. At least one room, whose departure was imminent, was mistakenly thought to have refused testing, but produced documentation of the tests and was therefore allowed to depart.
- 25 I observed that the requirements for testing changed as the restrictions ramped up.

Movement of staff between hotels

- 26 I am aware that a number of guards were working across multiple hotels locations. I know this because I observed other guards that I had worked with at Crowne, coming into the city on the tram and heading to other hotels, specifically the Pan Pacific Hotel.
- 27 While I was working at Crowne Plaza I also had to send a guard home as he was working a 12 hour shifts for us in security but was also working some day shifts at Coles. I had to send him home at one point because he extremely tired, and his position was covered by a 'spare' guard, of which there was usually one per shift to cover such contingencies.

- 28 At the Pullman Hotel I also overheard the nurses talking about working in different locations. I heard one nurse tell another in the lobby that she was going to be working at the Austin Hospital for the rest of the week.
- 29 There was also a DHHS staff member at the Pullman Hotel who told me in June that it was his last shift and he was moving over to the Stamford Plaza Hotel.
- 30 I was concerned about the risk of cross-contamination between the hotels because of movements of guards, nurses and DHHS staff.

Walks and fresh air breaks

- 31 We had guards whose job was to take people on walks; they were called “walkers”. They would go up to the guests’ rooms wearing PPE and bring them down in the lift for their walks. I didn’t take many guests on walks because I was a floor supervisor and I also only worked night shifts; walks were generally scheduled from 7am to 7pm.
- 32 Next door to the Pullman Hotel was the Mercure Hotel which was also being used as a quarantine hotel. Guests from the Mercure would have their walks in a lane beside the hotel, Loudon Place. The guards would put bollards on the end of the lane, by Little Bourke Street, to separate guests from the public and the guests would walk up and down, about 15 metres.
- 33 The guests would have to walk back out onto Little Bourke street past the bollards to go back inside the Mercure. I didn’t work at the Mercure Hotel, but I would see the walkers from the Mercure when I gave a break to a guard from the Pullman Hotel who was posted at the back door.
- 34 At the Pullman Hotel guests had walks on the rooftop. I never took any guests to the rooftop. In my last week at the Pullman Hotel all walks were stopped as they ramped up restrictions.

Incidents

- 35 Overall, I was surprised that there wasn’t more trouble in the hotels. In my experience it was rare to hear that things had ‘kicked off’. From what I observed people were most distressed when they first arrived but after a few days it seemed that people came to terms with their situation. It was apparent, though, that guests were using Facebook groups to communicate with each other, and generally collude over getting more walks or smoking breaks. From what I read online, guests would use Facebook to coach others into getting more breaks, such as letting the hotel/DHHS know that they were having a panic attack/feeling suicidal/aggressive if they weren't given a break from their room. In short, they feigned illness/panic via Facebook to get more breaks.

- 36 We did have an incident on one occasion with a young family. I got a call from a guard saying there was a lot of yelling going on and they could hear a baby or an infant crying and screaming, the guard thinking that the child may have been struck. I went up with the shift supervisor, a DHHS officer, mental health nurse and another nurse to check on them.
- 37 The DHHS staff member knocked on the door and the rest of us stood back, we were all wearing masks. The DHHS officer asked him some questions saying there had been a lot of noise. The father explained that the family needed more breaks outside, they had two young kids and they needed 15 minutes twice a day. They'd been in quarantine for a couple of days already and only had one 15-minute walk in that time. He really put it back on DHHS saying it was their fault because they weren't getting enough breaks. But no check of the children – whether they showed signs of violence, was performed by the DHHS. They assured the father that the family would get more breaks and that was it.
- 38 I heard about a guest at the Crowne Plaza who feigned serious illness to try and be taken to hospital. In that instance a DHHS officer, shift supervisor and a nurse came up to assess him. I remember seeing him in the foyer of the Crowne, there were three or four guards and police, but he wasn't prosecuted. Over the course of a week he made a lot of threats and created issues to try and get outside more. I felt he was looking for any excuse he could to get more breaks.
- 39 There was one other incident with a mother and daughter who had been quarantined overseas before they returned to Melbourne. The daughter had been through some other personal issues as well and I think the both were just at the end of their tether. The daughter went out for a walk and a smoke break and that was enough to calm her down.

General Observation about Subcontracting

- 40 Unified Security (**Unified**) took over providing the security at the Crowne Plaza after about three or four weeks there. I was told over the phone by a guard in operations at Nuforce that 'we were undercut', ie; Unified put in a bid for the security work that was cheaper than Wilson's and therefore got the job. My observation was that, as regards to guard provision, things had been running like clockwork at the Crowne Plaza prior to this happening.
- 41 In the beginning there were a few subcontractors who supplied guards at the Crowne Plaza. I had worked with some of these guards before and so I knew that they were not the best guards. I had to keep any eye on them, and make sure they didn't leave their posts, weren't asleep or on their phones too much.
- 42 After a couple of weeks these guards were moved on and we had a regular rotation of guards so the place started running really well. I remember about a week after these guards were moved on, I saw one of them on the tram coming into work. I asked him 'where are you now' and he said he was working at the Pan Pacific Hotel.

- 43 I don't know the name of the subcontractors that were being used at Crowne Plaza, we all wore the same uniform, which was a black suit and tie, so it wasn't clear which company the different guards were from.
- 44 There were guards from three or four subcontractors being used at the Pullman Hotel as well, I think one of the subcontractors was called Elite. I'd never heard of them before.
- 45 In my experience I have never worked at a major event where subcontractors weren't used. The bigger companies like Wilson and MSS will only have 200 or so guards directly employed and they get the rest of their guards through subcontracting.
- 46 My observation is that problems start when you have subcontracting on top of subcontracting and at each level the guards are being paid less and less.
- 47 The guards at the bottom are getting paid hardly anything. They are not going to be as conscientious and it is those guards that are more likely to work at different hotels, be on their phones or fall asleep. It is gruelling work, and the pay level is going to have some bearing on professionalism and conscientiousness.

Signature



Print name



Date

18 August 2020