

# **Victorian Board of Inquiry into the COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program**

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**Statement of Rosswyn Menezes in  
response to NTP-062**

**17 August 2020**



## Part 1 | Introduction

- 1 This statement by me:
  - (a) accurately sets out the evidence I am prepared to give to the Board of Inquiry into the COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program (the **Board of Inquiry**);
  - (b) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
  - (c) is provided in response to the Notice to Produce Documents NTP-062 dated 10 August 2020 (**Notice**) that was issued to me by the Board of Inquiry.
- 2 I make this witness statement based on matters within my own knowledge, the books and records of Rydges on Swanston (I refer to Rydges on Swanston as the "**Hotel**" in this statement) and Event Hospitality and Entertainment Ltd (**EVT**) that I have reviewed, and having made inquiries of officers and employees of both the Hotel and EVT.
- 3 This statement has been prepared with the assistance of lawyers in response to and in compliance with the Notice. It is produced to the Board of Inquiry on the basis that it will be tendered and received in evidence by the Board of Inquiry pursuant to the Notice and on the basis that the statement be treated as evidence pursuant to the *Inquiries Act 2014* (Vic).
- 4 I am aware that the Hotel has provided an initial response to the Board of Inquiry which is dated 17 July 2020 [RYD.0001.0001.0618] (**Initial Response**). I have read the Initial Response and was involved in its preparation. In this statement, I refer (where necessary) to the Initial Response as part of my answers to some of the questions in the Notice.
- 5 In this statement, I also refer to a number of documents that I produced to the Board of Inquiry in response to the Notice to Produce Documents NTP-020 dated 14 July 2020 that was issued to me by the Board of Inquiry. I do so by reference to the unique document identifier.

## Part 2 | Current role and professional background

### Question 1

What is your title and role at Rydges on Swanston?

### Question 2

What is your relevant employment background and work history?

### Question 3

To whom do you report?

- 6 I am currently the General Manager of the Hotel. I have been the General Manager of the Hotel since around August 2019. As noted in paragraph 1 of the Initial Response, Rydges Hotels Limited (**Rydges**) operates and manages the Hotel on behalf of and as agent for Charlor Proprietary Limited (**Charlor**) which owns the Hotel. I am formally employed by Charlor.
- 7 As General Manager of the Hotel:
  - (a) I am responsible for the day to day operational management of the Hotel's participation in the hotel quarantine program; and

- (b) I report to the owner of Charlor and the owner's representative (whose name is known to the Board of Inquiry). I also report to the Area General Manager of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania for Rydges Hotels Limited.

8 My relevant employment background and work history includes:

- (a) Rydges Melbourne, Rooms Division Manager (March 2019 – August 2019);
- (b) Rydges Geelong, Rooms Division Manager (June 2017 – March 2019);
- (c) Mercure Geelong,<sup>1</sup> Front Office Manager (April 2014 – June 2017);
- (d) Mercure Geelong, Hotel Assistant Manager (June 2012 – April 2014);
- (e) All Season Kingsgate Hotel, Melbourne, Front Office Duty Manager (April 2011 – June 2012);
- (f) All Season Crows Nest, Front Office Supervisor (October 2010 – March 2011);
- (g) Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort and Spa, Guest Service Agent/Front Office Coordinator (August 2008 – October 2010); and
- (h) Jumeirah Madinat Jumeirah, Mina Salam - Dubai, U.A.E, Guest Service Executive (January 2007 – May 2008).

### Part 3 | The Hotel's involvement in the hotel quarantine program

#### Question 4

To what extent, prior to the hotel quarantine program, had your hotel (or any entity in its corporate group) provided services to the Victorian government?

- 9 To my knowledge, the Hotel has not provided services to the Victorian government prior to the hotel quarantine program.

#### Question 5

When and how did your hotel or its corporate group first become aware that there was to be a role for hotels in accommodating returned travellers in quarantine?

- 10 Rydges and Charlor first became aware that there was to be a role for hotels in accommodating returned travellers in quarantine when the Prime Minister made the public announcement that returning travellers would be required to stay in hotels for 14 days.

#### Question 6

When did your hotel enter into an agreement with the Victorian Government to provide services as part of the hotel quarantine program?

#### Question 7

When was the agreement formalised in writing?

<sup>1</sup> Which is now known as Rydges Geelong.

- 11 I am aware that on 27 March 2020, the Victorian government first confirmed its intention to enter into an agreement with Charlor for the use of up to 95 rooms at the Hotel as part of the hotel quarantine program [See RYD.0001.0010.0003]. An agreement between Charlor and the State of Victoria through the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (**DJPR**) was formalised in writing and executed on or around 30 March 2020 [See RYD.0001.0010.0018] (**First Agreement**). For convenience, in this statement I refer to people using the Hotel for quarantine purposes as "**quarantine guests**".

#### Question 8

Prior to any agreement being reached with the Victorian government, was there any discussion or negotiation regarding -

- (a) infection control,
- (b) personal protective equipment and
- (c) specialised training for hotel staff who would be involved in the hotel quarantine program?

- 12 Prior to the First Agreement, I was not involved in any discussion or negotiation with DJPR or any other Victorian Government Department in relation to infection control, personal protective equipment (**PPE**), or specialised training for Hotel staff who would be involved in the hotel quarantine program.
- 13 I am also not aware of any specific discussions or negotiation between DJPR and staff of the Hotel, Rydges and/or Charlor in relation to infection control, PPE or specialised training for Hotel staff who would be involved in the hotel quarantine program. It may be that those topics came up in general discussions between DJPR and Charlor's authorised representative in the lead up to the First Agreement being signed, however I was not personally involved in any such discussions.

#### Question 9

Was the agreement changed or varied over time? if so, give details.

- 14 I am aware that the First Agreement has been extended and varied as follows:
- (a) **First Option Period.** On 22 April 2020, the DJPR (on behalf of the State of Victoria) elected to exercise an option to extend the First Agreement for one calendar month, from 27 April 2020 to 27 May 2020 [See RYD.0001.0010.0094]. I am aware that Charlor and the DJPR agreed in writing to certain variations to the First Agreement, but I do not have a specific recollection of the variations, other than a variation in relation to a laundry allowance for quarantine guests; and
  - (b) **Second Option Period.** On 22 May 2020, the DJPR (on behalf of the State of Victoria) elected to exercise an option to extend the First Agreement for a further one calendar month to finish on 27 June 2020 [See RYD.0001.0001.0252]. Similar to the First Agreement, I am aware that Charlor and the DJPR agreed in writing to certain variations to the Second Agreement for the Second Option Period, but I do not have a specific recollection of those variations.
- 15 As there were no option periods remaining under the First Agreement, the First Agreement expired on 27 June 2020. On 27 June 2020, Charlor and the State of Victoria through the DJPR entered into a second agreement for the use of 95 rooms at the Hotel as part of the hotel quarantine program with an end date of 27 July 2020 [See RYD.0001.0001.0013] (**Second**

**Agreement**). The Second Agreement includes an option to extend the term by one month at DHHS' discretion, and also has the same accommodation terms and conditions as the First Agreement (as amended).

- 16 I am aware that on 1 July 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (**DHHS**) sent a letter to Charlor noting that, due to administrative changes, the responsibility for contract management of the hotel quarantine program was transferred from the DJPR to the DHHS. As such, the Second Agreement was varied on 1 July 2020 to replace DJPR with DHHS as the other party responsible for contract management of the Second Agreement [See RYD.0001.0001.0011].

Question 10

Is the involvement of your hotel in the hotel quarantine program ongoing? If not, state the date of last involvement and the reason why your hotel is no longer involved.

- 17 Rydges on Swanston continues to be involved in the hotel quarantine program. I am aware that on or around 22 July 2020, DHHS (on behalf of the State of Victoria) exercised the option to extend the Second Agreement, which expires on 26 August 2020. The quarantine guests currently at the Hotel are all scheduled to depart on or before 27 August 2020.

**Part 4 | Total quarantine guests at the Hotel**

Question 11

When did the first guests arrive as part of the hotel quarantine program?

- 18 The first quarantine guests that used the Hotel for quarantine purposes arrived from Uruguay on 12 April 2020 [See RYD.0001.0001.0690], which was Easter Sunday. These quarantine guests had been on the Greg Mortimer cruise ship which was docked in Uruguay, and I understand they were some of the first quarantine guests to arrive back into Australia as part of the hotel quarantine program.

Question 12

How many guests stayed at your hotel as part of the hotel quarantine program?

Question 13

How many guests tested positive for COVID-19?

- 19 As of 12 August 2020, approximately 313 quarantine guests have stayed at the Hotel as part of the hotel quarantine program. My understanding is that approximately 274 of those quarantine guests have tested positive for COVID-19.

Question 14

Were different arrangements in place at your hotel for guests who were positive for COVID-19 or displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

- 20 All quarantine guests who arrived at the Hotel as part of the hotel quarantine program were treated the same by Rydges, regardless of whether they had returned a positive result. Unless Rydges asked, it was not informed which quarantine guests had tested positive for COVID-19.

- 21 I am unaware as to whether government, security or other entities or persons involved in the hotel quarantine program at the Hotel treated quarantine guests who were positive for COVID-19 differently.
- 22 I note that the information provided by DHHS to the Hotel on 10 April 2020 [See RYD.0001.0012.0090] – that is, prior to the first quarantine guests arriving – asked staff to assume that all quarantine guests were COVID-19 positive. In addition, the service procedure for delivering food and other items to quarantine guests at their rooms required all staff to:
- (a) put on required PPE based on each task to be performed (including overalls, masks, goggles and gloves) prior to entering the service lift;
  - (b) place items outside the rooms, knock on the door, and move away; and
  - (c) attend a doffing station after delivering the food and other items to properly dispose of gloves and masks and clean their hands with sanitiser before entering the service lift.
- 23 On or around 27 April 2020, following the departure of the initial quarantine guests from the Greg Mortimer cruise ship, it was decided by DHHS that the Hotel would be declared a “positive hotel” for confirmed COVID-19 cases only. To the best of my recollection, that declaration was first communicated verbally to Charlor’s authorised representative. As such, I assume that the Hotel’s intake of quarantine guests from that date onwards did not include any individuals who had not yet tested positive for COVID-19.

#### Part 5 | Total physical environment at the Hotel

##### Question 15

Please briefly describe the physical layout of your hotel and provide floor plans.

##### Question 16

Which areas of your hotel were used as part of the hotel quarantine program? Please indicate these areas on the floor plans that you provide.

##### Question 17

How was each relevant area of your hotel used?

##### Question 18

What were the restrictions and requirements (if any) on people entering and leaving each of those areas?

- 24 Full plans of the Hotel have been produced to the Board of Inquiry [see RYD.0001.0010.0084] (**Hotel Plans**). In summary, the physical layout of the Hotel is as follows:
- (a) There are 107 rooms across 5 floors. There are two rings of rooms on each floor:
    - (i) an outside ring of rooms with windows and views external to the building;
    - (ii) an internal ring of rooms which do not have views external to the building, but which are built around an internal light void which runs through the centre of the Hotel;
  - (b) On the ground floor [see RYD.0001.0010.0084 at .0086]:

- (i) to the left hand side of the lobby (which is labelled as the “foyer” on the plans), there is a restaurant and bar area;
  - (ii) to the right hand side of the lobby, there is the reception front desk and behind the front desk there are three conference rooms which are marked on the plans as “Faraday”, “Pelham” and “Greenberry”. The conference rooms are no longer called those names;
  - (iii) at the rear of the ground floor is the Hotel’s kitchen and servery, as well as male and female toilets;
- (c) On the roof of the Hotel [see RYD.0001.0010.0084 at .0091), there:
- (i) is a pool, sauna and outdoor lounge area with a bar;
  - (ii) are three separate functions rooms; and
  - (iii) is a small kitchen area;
- (d) The Hotel has a basement where guests and staff can park their cars. There is a guest lift in the basement. The basement is not shown on the Hotel Plans.
- 25 Some areas of the Hotel were designated by DHHS as a ‘clean zone’ which is discussed in more detail as paragraph 26 below. Hotel staff and other personnel involved in the quarantine program were:
- (a) required to put on PPE before going into a zone that was not designated as a ‘clean zone’, and to doff (or take off) the PPE when exiting that zone in accordance with the signs and instructions that were placed at various locations around the Hotel. These locations included special PPE stations that had been strategically placed around the Hotel (**PPE stations**) on the advice of and at locations specified by infection control experts engaged by the DHHS and nurses who had attended the Hotel on or around 11 or 12 April 2020. PPE stations were placed next to lifts for staff to use before entering an area that was designated as a clean zone [see RYD.0001.0002.0148 and RYD.0001.0012.0102]; and
  - (b) not required to wear PPE when in clean zones.
- 26 Having regard to the above, the relevant areas of the Hotel were used and designated in the following ways for the quarantine program:
- (a) **Accommodation levels.** Quarantine guests were put in rooms on levels 1, 2 and 3 of the Hotel. There were initially 4 security guards on each level, which was later reduced to 1 security guard when the Department of Corrections became involved [See RYD.0001.0002.0142 and RYD.0001.0001.0093]. Hotel staff had limited access to the guest lift.
  - (b) **Ground floor [clean zone].** The ground floor was broken up into four main areas:
    - (i) The lobby was utilised by all those assisting with the quarantine program at the Hotel. There was always security in the lobby to monitor and restrict access to people entering the Hotel from off the street;
    - (ii) The reception area, and the office behind the reception area, was used exclusively by Hotel staff to perform operational tasks. Security guards and DHHS staff were not allowed to access the reception areas used by Hotel staff;

- (iii) Each of the conference rooms were made available to and used mostly by the DHHS and its staff (including their authorised officers) as a type of control centre, and to set up medical stations for the on-site nurses.<sup>2</sup> Security guards and Hotel staff had limited access to these conference rooms (for example, when participating in the daily briefings discussed in response to question 19 below); and
- (iv) The bar area was used by security for sign-in purposes and as a type of break out area (for example, where they could have lunch);

Quarantine guests were not allowed at any point to access or use the ground floor.

- (c) **Hotel kitchen [clean zone].** The Hotel kitchen was used exclusively by hotel staff to prepare meals for quarantine guests. Security guards were not permitted to enter this area and DHHS staff had limited access;
- (d) **Pool deck and skyline.** The roof of the Hotel was used by quarantine guests to go for walks and exercise, escorted by security guards and DHHS staff. The function rooms were also used by quarantine guests with kids, for exercise. Hotel staff were not permitted to access the roof area;
- (e) **Basement and garage.** The basement and garage area was used as the entry point for incoming arrivals to the Hotel. All incoming arrivals were escorted from the basement and garage area to their pre-allocated room by security guards and DHHS staff. Hotel staff were not permitted to access the basement or garage area during those times and until the area was sanitised and cleaned; and
- (f) **Guest lift.** The guest lift was used to transport the Hotel quarantine guests from the basement to their pre-allocated rooms by security guards and DHHS staff. Hotel staff had limited access to the guest lift.

## Part 6 | Communication and information sharing

### Question 19

What lines of communication were in place between your hotel and government departments?

- 27 As noted in paragraph 6 of the Initial Response, there have been Department briefings at the Hotel, generally occurring twice daily at 9.30am and again at 3.30pm (**daily briefings**). The daily briefings are convened and coordinated by the Department's Team Leader and are usually attended by a representative from the Hotel (generally the Manager on Duty), along with other representatives and contractors of the Department, including the authorised officer, nursing staff, and the security guards.
- 28 The daily briefings have been and continue to be the primary forum and means by which Hotel staff communicated with the Department, security personnel and other contractors in relation to operational and other matters. These matters are discussed at the briefings and if necessary, decisions are also made to seek to ensure the risks of virus transmission at the Hotel are minimised and any operational issues are resolved.
- 29 I am aware that, in addition to the daily briefings, other lines of communication included:
  - (a) **Emails.** There were some occasions where I exchanged emails with DHHS staff and other people involved in the quarantine program about operational matters at the Hotel. I

<sup>2</sup> For clarity, COVID-19 testing did not take place at this medical station.

am also aware that other Hotel staff, for example <sup>sensitive</sup> [REDACTED] exchanged emails with DHHS staff and other people involved in the quarantine program at the Hotel and sometimes I was copied on those emails. I understand that any such emails have been produced to the Board of Inquiry [for example see RYD.0001.0001.0912, RYD.0001.0001.0702 and RYD.0001.0001.0791].

- (b) **Ad hoc discussions.** Because DHHS staff (including the Team Leader and Authorised Officer) were stationed at the Hotel, I would from time to time have face-to-face discussions about operational matters as necessary. I am aware that some of my staff may also have had such discussions as necessary, but I am not able to speak to what might have been discussed as I was not always involved.
- (c) **Phone calls.** I am aware there were some occasions where phone calls may have occurred with DHHS and/or DJPR staff concerning operational matters at the Hotel. For example, I am aware that there were phone calls between DJPR staff and Charlor's authorised representative in relation to the contractual arrangements. As noted in sub-paragraph (b) above, given I was physically located at the Hotel, most of my communication with the DHHS staff was face-to-face conversations or during the daily briefings.

Question 20

What information did you receive about the persons being quarantined at your hotel?

Question 21

How did you receive that information?

- 30 In advance of the arrival of a new cohort of quarantine guests, the Hotel would generally receive an email from DHHS detailing information pertaining to the quarantine guests. This information included the quarantine guest's name, contact number and dietary requirements [see for example RYD.0001.0001.0203 and RYD.0001.0001.0813]. On limited occasions, I would also receive a verbal notification from DHHS staff that there was a new cohort of quarantine guests who would be arriving at the Hotel. As noted in my answer to questions 13 and 14 above, the Hotel has received 313 quarantine guests who have arrived in 4 main groups, on the 12 April 2020, 24 April 2020, 28 June 2020, and 28 July 2020.
- 31 As noted in my answer to question 11 above, the first quarantine guests at the Hotel arrived from Uruguay on 12 April 2020. After the cohort of quarantine guests from Uruguay, DHHS informed us that we would be receiving locals only who had tested positive for COVID-19 and were unable to isolate at home.

Question 22

What reports were you required to make to government departments about the persons being quarantined at your hotel?

- 32 I was not required to make any reports to DHHS and/or DJPR about the Hotel's quarantine guests. I am also not aware of any obligation on other Hotel staff, Charlor and/or Rydges to provide reports to the Victorian government about our quarantine guests.

## Part 7 | Communication and information sharing

### Question 23

Who was/is your contact(s) at the Department of Health and Human Services?

33 My main contacts at DHHS during the quarantine program have been:

- (a) [REDACTED] Manager Emergency Management, Barwon South West;
- (b) [REDACTED] Deputy Commander, Strategy and Planning; and
- (c) [REDACTED] Senior Project Manager.

### Question 24

What directions and requests have been given to you by Department of Health and Human Services, in relation to the quarantine program, and specifically by whom in the Department of Health and Human Services were those directions and/or requests made?

### Question 25

Did the directions and requests given to you by Department of Health and Human Services change over time? If so, please provide details.

- 34 The Hotel building became a quarantine facility essentially operated at the direction of the Victorian government. The Victorian government directed, controlled and coordinated its contractors, including the Hotel staff and other third parties, to provide services in support of the quarantine program. Those third-party contractors included entities such as security contractors, cleaners and nurses.
- 35 As noted in my answer to question 19 above, there have been daily briefings at the Hotel for the duration of the hotel quarantine program. These daily briefings continue as at the date of my statement. These briefings are called and coordinated by the Department's Team Leader, and are usually attended by a representative from the Hotel, along with other representatives and contractors of the Department, including the authorised officer, nursing staff, and the security officers. The daily briefings are the primary forum by which Hotel staff communicated with the Department, security personnel and other contractors in relation to operational and other matters. These matters are discussed at the briefings and if necessary, decisions are also made to seek to ensure the risks of virus transmission at the Hotel are minimised and any operational issues are resolved. The Department has final say at these briefings.
- 36 Additionally, to the best of my knowledge, DHHS has given the following directions and requests over the course of the quarantine program:
- (a) On 10 April 2020, I received an email from Charlor's authorised representative which recorded directions that we had received from DHHS in relation to procedures for arrivals, check-in, meals, and supervision for the Hotel in advance of the first quarantine guests arriving [RYD.0001.0001.1140 and RYD.0001.0001.1141];
  - (b) On 12 April 2020, I received direction from DHHS nurses regarding PPE protocol, sanitisation, and cleaning practices [RYD.0001.0001.0641];

- (c) On 12 April 2020, I gave suggestions to DHHS staff regarding the procedure for quarantine guest arrival, which involved having quarantine guests entering the Hotel through the basement [RYD.0001.0001.0320];
- (d) On 22 May 2020, I forwarded an email to hotel staff regarding the initiation of temperature checks when arriving at the Hotel at the request of DHHS nurses [RYD.0001.0001.0132];
- (e) On 27 May 2020, I received a request from DHHS nurses to complete a hand sanitising course [RYD.0001.0001.0284];
- (f) On 27 May 2020, I received a letter from DHHS requesting all hotel staff who had spent 30 minutes or more at the Hotel since 11 May to get tested for COVID-19 [RYD.0001.0001.0368];
- (g) On 30 May 2020, I received an email from DHHS directing all hotel staff to enter a mandatory quarantine for 14 days [RYD.0001.0001.0156];
- (h) On 6 June 2020, I received a request from DHHS for CCTV footage to identify the cause of a transmission of COVID-19 within the Hotel [RYD.0001.0001.0680];
- (i) On 18 June 2020, I received confirmation from DHHS to allow the Hotel to receive more quarantine guests following an inspection from infection control [RYD.0001.0002.0183], and received a document which included operational changes for the Hotel [RYD.0001.0001.0076];
- (j) On 27 June 2020, I recorded directions from DHHS of further operational changes to the hotel quarantine program at the Hotel and circulated those operational changes to the team via email [RYD.0001.0001.0077];
- (k) On 7 July 2020, I received direction from DHHS of additional operational changes after consultation with infection control [RYD.0001.0001.0093].

Question 26

Who was/is your contact(s) at Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions?

- 37 My main contacts at DJPR during the quarantine program have been:
- (a) Unni Menon, Executive Director, Aviation Strategy and Services;
  - (b) Donna Findlay, Director DJPR;
  - (c) Gonul Serbest, CEO of Global Victoria;
  - (d) Rachaele May, Acting Executive Director, Emergency Coordination and Resilience; and
  - (e) Tim Sullivan, Acting Director, Global Partnerships and Projects.

Question 27

What directions and requests were given to you by the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions, in relation to the hotel quarantine program, and specifically by whom in the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions were those directions and/or requests made?

Question 28

Did the directions and requests given to you by the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions changed over time? If so, please provide details.

- 38 I outline at the beginning of question 25 and 26 above the way in which DHHS conducted the program at the Hotel, including the implementation of daily briefings. This continued under DJPR. To the best of my knowledge, DJPR has given the following directions and requests over the course of the quarantine program:
- (a) On 27 March 2020, I was copied on an email from Donna Findlay in which DJPR requested that the Hotel accommodate 20 incoming arrivals that evening, which the Department ultimately did not require [RYD.0001.0001.0117]. I also recall discussing this request on a call with Charlor's authorised representative;
  - (b) On 11 May 2020, I received an email from Rachael May in which she directed that the entire security guard team had been stood down following instances of inappropriate behaviour towards female hotel staff by certain security guards [RYD.0001.0009.0138];
  - (c) On 1 June 2020, I received an email from Rachael May in which she confirmed all the quarantine guests who were currently staying at the Hotel would be moved to the Novotel South Wharf Hotel [RYD.0001.0001.0104];
  - (d) On 14 June 2020; I received an email from Rachael May in which she highlighted inadequacies in the cleaning of certain areas of the Hotel by the Government's third-party specialist cleaner following a site inspection from DHHS specialists and requested further cleaning to be undertaken [RYD.0001.0001.1129];
  - (e) On 1 July 2020, I received a letter from DJPR with the direction that the administration for the provision of accommodation had changed from DJPR to DHHS [RYD.0001.0001.0011]; and
  - (f) On 2 July 2020, I noted directions from DHHS that the security team had been replaced by the Department of Corrections [RYD.0001.0001.0195 and RYD.0001.0010.0050].

Question 29

Were directions, information or requests given to you by any other government department or agency? If so, please provide details.

- 39 I did not receive directions from Victorian government departments other than DHHS and DJPR. The Department of Justice and Community Safety (**DJCS**) took over security of the hotel on 2 July 2020 [See RYD.0001.0001.0093]. However, the Hotel has not received any directions from DJCS to date.

## Part 8 | Communication and information sharing

### Question 30

Who of your staff have been involved in the quarantine program?

### Question 31

What were the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the quarantine program?

- 40 In the Appendix to this statement is a table in which I have set out a list of our staff who were involved in the hotel quarantine program at the Hotel, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

### Question 32

As far as you are aware, have any hotel staff involved in the quarantine program tested positive for COVID-19?

- 41 In late May 2020, an employee (whose name is known to the Board of Inquiry) became infected with COVID-19. That employee's temperature was checked on 22 May 2020 and it was 36 degrees [RYD.0001.0001.0129]. His temperature was checked again on 23 May 2020 and it was 36.1 degrees [RYD.0001.0001.0129]. Both times were below normal levels of 37.5 degrees. The employee was not rostered to work again until 26 May 2020, however the employee called me on 25 May 2020 to inform me that he was not feeling well, that he would not be attending work, and that he was going to be tested for COVID-19. As soon as the employee informed me he was being tested, he did not come into work and went into isolation at the direction of the doctor who tested the employee.
- 42 To my knowledge, no other Hotel staff have tested positive. As set out in the Initial Response, neither I or anyone at the Hotel was in a position to conclude how the employee came to be infected, however the Hotel did not identify any shortcomings in its systems or non-compliance with protocols that may have resulted in this infection.

### Question 33

To your knowledge, were any hotel staff rostered to work at quarantine hotels also working at other locations?

- 43 To my knowledge, two of the Hotel's staff have worked at other locations during the quarantine program:
- (a) one of our Chefs, who also works at the Mantra Bellicity hotel; and
  - (b) one of our Housekeeping cleaners – who also works at Demos Property Services.

## Part 9 | Training and supervision

### Question 34

What (if any) training was provided to your staff by any government department regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner?

- 44 As noted in paragraph 25(a) above, on or around 11 or 12 April, specialist infection control experts engaged by DHHS inspected the Hotel and arranged for PPE stations to be strategically placed around the Hotel, along with posters and instructions about how to correctly don and doff PPE. Photos showing some of the PPE stations at the Hotel are at [see RYD.0001.0012.0102 and RYD.0001.0012.0105]. During that visit, the infection control experts showed me and a limited number of my staff (though I can't specifically recall who) how to correctly don and doff PPE. We were advised to show other Hotel staff how to correctly don and doff PPE. To my knowledge, the only training the Hotel staff received from DHHS was in relation to how to don and doff PPE.
- 45 During the following weeks, there were ad hoc occasions where the on-site nurses would provide refreshers on 'how to' don and doff PPE.
- 46 I am also aware that on 27 May 2020, one of the on-site nurses suggested that Hotel staff undertake an online hand hygiene course [see RYD.0001.0001.0284]. A number of Hotel staff completed the training and received certificates of completion [see RYD.0001.0008.0050 and RYD.0001.0001.1155].

**Question 35**

What (if any) training was provided to your staff by your organisation regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner?

- 47 In addition to the training set out in response to question 34 above, on or around 15 March 2020, which was prior to any quarantine guests arriving at the Hotel, <sup>sensitive</sup> [REDACTED] –Group General Manager, QT Hotels – circulated a Hotel General Manager's 'toolkit' to all General Managers of Hotels within the EVT group (**Toolkit**) [see RYD.0001.0017.0006 and RYD.0001.0017.0007]. This included me as General Manager of the Hotel. The stated intent of the toolkit document is to:

*“outline and recommend effective prevention and control of infectious disease and or Coronavirus (COVID-19)...This guideline is intended to provide practical information on the preventive measures of a Coronavirus (COVID-19) for those who work in hotels.”*

- 48 The Toolkit provides guidance on things such as:
- (a) Information about COVID-19, what it is, symptoms, how it is spread and how I could protect myself and prevent the spread of the virus;
  - (b) Links to government and other sources of information about COVID-19;
  - (c) Procedures for returning staff;
  - (d) Hotel's response to illness;
  - (e) Cleaning and disinfecting;
  - (f) Environmental surfaces;
  - (g) Hand hygiene and hand washing technique;
  - (h) PPE;
  - (i) Environmental hygiene; and
  - (j) A General Manger's checklist.

- 49 Once the Hotel became involved in the quarantine program (that is, after the First Agreement was signed on 27 March 2020), I sent an email to the Hotel's senior managers in which I shared the Toolkit and advised them that they should read and follow the guidance in the Toolkit and share it with their teams. I also sent an email to all Hotel staff on 29 March 2020 – prior to any quarantine guests arriving at the Hotel – attaching a memorandum on social distancing and a guide on cleaning and disinfecting [see RYD.0001.0001.0119]. In that email I say:

*"Hi All,*

*Please find attached memo on social distancing at the workplace.*

*It is imperative to follow these guideline to safeguard yourself as well as others at the hotel.*

*As some of you would be aware, the hotel will be accommodating self-isolating international travellers and hence we need to follow strict protocols to ensure we protect ourselves.*

*Please see me if you have any questions or any further suggestions on improving our practices.*

*Thank you."*

- 50 Each Hotel staff member also received on the job training. For example, each staff member, including myself, was shown the correct way to do their jobs or tasks prior to them undertaking those tasks via 'dry runs'. For example, by preparing food in accordance with the suggestions in the Toolkit, and then one of the Hotel staff donning PPE and delivering food to the quarantine rooms.
- 51 In addition to the Toolkit, I note that in or around 30 March to 5 April 2020 – again prior to the first quarantine guests arriving at the Hotel – I prepared a number of Standard Operating Procedures (**SOPs**) which I distributed to Hotel Staff and which were required to be followed by each Hotel staff member in undertaking their daily tasks and work. These SOPs were:
- (a) COVID Group Check in;
  - (b) COVID Individual Check in;
  - (c) COVID HSK Procedures;
  - (d) COVID Fire Alarm SOP;
- 52 All SOPs were discussed with the DHHS team leader on-site for their advice, guidance (sometimes they suggested amendments) and approval. Based on these discussions, we updated the SOPs and we continue to follow these processes as at the date of this statement.

Question 36

What onsite supervision was in place for your staff at your hotel, in relation to the hotel quarantine program?

- 53 As noted in paragraph 5 of the Initial Response, Hotel staff and the functions we perform as part of the quarantine program are subject to direction and advice provided by specialist independent nurses, infection control experts (appointed by DHHS) and other DHHS and DJPR experts who are located at the Hotel on a day-to-day basis.

- 54 We also always have a Manager on Duty in charge of the Hotel. Most of the time, I perform that function. However, it can also be performed by other senior staff such as [sensitive] [sensitive] our Operations Manager, or [sensitive] [sensitive] our Front Office Manager. At least one of us works each day at the Hotel so we always have a senior manager on site who is supervising Hotel staff. Hotel staff who have concerns either share those concerns with me directly or with a senior manager who in turn communicates that concern with me. I am then responsible for escalating and discussing those concerns with my contacts at DHHS. I am also on call 24 hours a day and can be contacted by Hotel staff.
- 55 I have always encouraged my staff to share any concerns that they may have, including in relation to risks, the safety of the workplace and working conditions.

### Part 10 | Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

#### Question 37

What PPE (if any) was provided by your organisation for hotel staff to use?

#### Question 38

What PPE (if any) was provided to hotel staff by any government department?

#### Question 39

Were hotel staff at any time required to provide their own PPE?

- 56 We had a supply of plastic gloves for food service. However, this was a general practice that was already in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Hotel's involvement in the quarantine program. We continue to provide plastic gloves to our kitchen staff for the purposes of food handling and meal preparation.
- 57 Otherwise, DHHS and DJPR provide all PPE equipment to our Hotel staff and to all other personnel involved in the quarantine program at the Hotel. This includes:
- (a) gloves;
  - (b) eye protection (such as goggles and face shields where necessary);
  - (c) face masks;
  - (d) hand sanitiser; and
  - (e) disposable overalls.
- 58 These PPE supplies are located at each of the PPE stations and are also available from the nurses stationed in the conference rooms. Hand sanitiser is placed at multiple locations throughout the Hotel, particularly on the ground floor.
- 59 At no stage during the quarantine program have Hotel staff been required to provide their own PPE.

Question 40

What directions (if any) did your organisation give to your staff about when to use PPE?

Question 41

What training (if any) was given to hotel staff regarding the correct use of PPE? Who provided that training?

60 I refer to my answers to questions 34 and 35 above.

61 sensitive and I are responsible for providing staff with guidance on the correct use of PPE, for example where they have returned to work following a period of time off. We provide this training primarily using the donning and doffing guide provided by infection control on 11 and 12 April as referred to in paragraph 44 above [RYD.0001.0001.0282].

Question 42

Did your organisation at any time experience a shortage of PPE? If so, how was that shortage managed?

62 To my knowledge the Hotel and our staff have not experienced a shortage of PPE. In my opinion, DHHS and DJPR staff and nurses have always had an adequate supply of PPE available to provide to us. If we have ever needed PPE, we simply ask the nurses and they have always provided it to us.

Question 43

Was your organisation ever asked to provide PPE to anyone other than hotel staff? If so, please provide details?

63 To my knowledge, Hotel staff have never been asked to provide PPE to anyone else involved in the quarantine program at the Hotel. As noted in paragraph 57 above, DHHS and DJPR provide all PPE equipment to our Hotel staff and to all other personnel involved in the quarantine program at the Hotel.

**Part 11 | Complaints and concerns**

Question 44

Who was responsible for identifying and addressing health and safety risks to hotel staff arising from the quarantine program?

64 As noted in paragraph 52 above, Hotel staff and the functions we perform as part of the quarantine program are subject to direction and advice provided by specialist independent nurses, infection control experts (appointed by DHHS) and other DHHS and DJPR experts who are located at the Hotel on a day-to-day basis. This includes identifying and addressing health and safety risks to Hotel staff. We rely on the Victorian government's expertise – including the nurses, Team Leaders and infection control experts – to identify and address those specific safety risks.

65 It is also part of my General Manager role to supervise my staff. Additionally, I see it as the responsibility of all Hotel staff to identify any health and safety risks, or departures from procedures and protocols, arising out of the hotel quarantine program and to report those

health and safety risks to me and to DHHS. It is then DHHS' responsibility to address those health and safety risks.

#### Question 45

What risks were identified and when were they identified? What was done (if anything) to mitigate those risks? In your opinion, were those measures adequate and effective?

- 66 I understand this question to be asking me about health and safety risks to Hotel staff arising from the quarantine program that have been identified by Hotel staff and reported to me or my senior managers. Other than the incidents I refer to in my answer to question 47 below, none of the Hotel staff have raised concerns to me about:
- (a) their safety; or
  - (b) risks they have identified arising out of their involvement in the quarantine program, or in relation to the Hotel's policies and procedures for the quarantine program.
- 67 I am also not aware of any such concerns being raised with the other senior managers on my staff, for example <sup>sensitive</sup> [redacted] and <sup>sensitive</sup> [redacted]
- 68 On or around 15 June 2020, I sent an email to the Victorian State Manager at Unified Security in which I outlined a number of concerns related to security guards not practicing social distancing while at the Hotel [see RYD.0001.0001.0113]. Unified Security were the security guards contracted to the Victorian government at the time to provide security services at the Hotel. In my email, I raised the following concerns:
- "Further to interactions from DHHS to investigate the outbreak at the hotel, we have observed a few concerns that we would like addressed by the security team.*
- *Guards sit together and have meals. Social distancing protocols not followed.*
  - *Need to sanitise hands prior to making a coffee.*
  - *In lobby, I've noticed guards gather to watch videos. Social distancing protocols not followed*
- ..."
- 69 I escalated these concerns to the public health team at DHHS. I am unable to verify what measures were put in place, or make comment on whether they were adequate or effective.

#### Question 46

Who was responsible for identifying and acting on complaints or concerns regarding work conditions for hotel staff in relation to the quarantine program?

- 70 I refer to my answer to question 36 above, in particular paragraph 54.
- 71 I also refer to paragraph 11(a) of the Initial Response. After one of our employees became infected with the virus (in or around late May 2020), I am aware that the Hotel introduced an additional support service to all Hotel staff. This role is performed by the General Manager of People and Culture, and it allows Hotel staff to directly contact and communicate with the General Manager of People and Culture, to discuss any issues or concerns they have. The aim of the additional service is to ensure Hotel staff have a direct point of contact other than myself

or one of the other senior managers for support, if required. Shortly after the new support service was implemented, the General Manager of People and Culture made direct contact with each Hotel staff member, to explain the new service and its purpose, and to gauge staff sentiment.

#### Question 47

What complaints and concerns (if any) were raised? In relation to any complaints and concerns:

- (a) what were the details including dates;
- (b) how was the complaint or concern dealt with; and
- (c) what was the outcome?

72 To my knowledge, I am aware of three complaints or concerns regarding work conditions for Hotel Staff:

- (a) **Lobby Incident 1.** On 12 May 2020, DHHS had not gone through the proper procedures with the new security team in relation to the arrivals process [RYD.0001.0001.0098]. We raised this with DHHS and to my knowledge, they prepared a standard operating procedure for the security guards which they are required to read at the start of each shift. This standard operation procedure was circulated to all Hotel staff [see RYD.0001.0001.0319 and RYD.0001.0001.0320];
- (b) **Lobby Incident 2.** On 12 May 2020, security guards in the lobby were going to let a paramedic and infected patient in through the ground level of the Hotel, which was against the normal protocol on account of the fact that it is a clean zone. [see RYD.0001.0001.0100]. I discussed this incident with one of the DHHS staff. I am aware that DHHS subsequently prepared a 'how to' guide on how to allow people through the basement and provided that to each security guard so they could read it;
- (c) **Social distancing between security guards.** On or around 12 May 2020, I recall having a telephone conversation with Unified Security's National Operations Manager in relation to the changeover to new security guards and the conduct of the new security guards. I advised him on the call that: (i) I had observed them not practicing social distancing; (ii) I thought they needed to practice more social distancing; and (ii) suggested that he needs to get the manager of the security guards to ensure they practice social distancing;
- (d) **Security training incident.** On 13 May 2020, a Hotel staff member raised concerns about the new security guards with myself, <sup>sensitive</sup> [REDACTED] and <sup>sensitive</sup> [REDACTED] [RYD.0001.0001.0107]. In particular, he identified a lack of:
  - (i) knowledge with regard to the correct procedures on how to receive and transfer quarantine guests to their rooms;
  - (ii) equipment, including safety glasses and gowns;
  - (iii) ID checking for people entering the Hotel; and
  - (iv) vigilance with regard to stopping personnel from entering the Hotel without proper sanitisation of their hands

Question 48

Did you or your organisation identify or receive notice of poor or unacceptable conduct by any person in connection with the hotel quarantine program? [Without limiting the generality of this question, it includes hotel staff, contracted cleaning, catering and security personnel, authorised officers and government departmental personnel]

Question 49

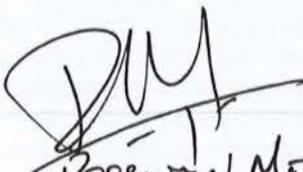
If so:

- (e) what were the details including when notifications were made;
- (f) how were those issues dealt with; and
- (g) what was the outcome?

72 To my knowledge, Hotel staff have not been the subject of any complaints for poor or unacceptable conduct in connection with the quarantine program. Nor am I aware of any complaints being made against DHHS/DJPR staff, or the on-site nurses, for poor or unacceptable conduct in connection with the quarantine program.

73 However, on or around 10 May 2020, <sup>sensitive</sup> [redacted] sent me an email in which she raised a number of complaints about the way she and a number of other female Hotel staff and on-site nurses involved in the quarantine program at the Hotel had been treated by third party security guards. The following day, I escalated the matter by forwarding <sup>sensitive</sup> [redacted] email to both Matthew Chamberlain, my contact at DHHS [see RYD.0001.0001.0372] and Donna Findlay, my contact at DJPR [see RYD.0001.0010.0107].

74 To my knowledge, the security guards in question were immediately stood down and were replaced by other security guards on 11 May 2020. I was involved in a meeting with a number of DHHS staff on 12 May 2020 about the incident with the security guards. The minutes of that meeting have been produced to the Board of Inquiry [see RYD.0001.0001.0378].

Signature <u></u> Name <u>ROSSWYN MENEZES</u> Date <u>17<sup>th</sup> AUG 2020</u>	Witness <u></u> Name <u>[redacted]</u> Date <u>17/8/20</u>
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**APPENDIX****Table 1. List of Hotel staff and their roles and responsibilities [Questions 30 & 31, [xx]]**

No	Staff name	Role / title	Responsibilities
1	sensitive	Operations Manager	Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping
2		Front Office Manager	Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping
3		Duty Manager	Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping
4		Finance Controller	Accounting
5		Business Development Manager	Sales
6		Conference and Events Coordinator	Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping
7		Night Manager	Receptionist, Overnight Public area cleaner
8		Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping	Receptionist, F&B Service, Housekeeping
9		Food and Beverage Supervisor	Assisted with food and beverage preparation and delivery.
10		Food and Beverage Casual	Assisted with food and beverage preparation and delivery.
11		Sous Chef	Prepared meals in the kitchen for hotel guests
12		Chef	Prepared meals in the kitchen for hotel guests
13		Chef	Prepared meals in the kitchen for hotel guests
14		HSK Casual	Public Area Cleaning and Room make-up
15		Housekeeping	Public Area Cleaning and Room make-up
16		Housekeeper	Public Area Cleaning and Room make-up
17		Handyman	Assisted with food and beverage delivery to the guest rooms and public area cleaning
18	sensitive	Housekeeping	Public Area Cleaning and Room make-up
19		Housekeeping	Public Area Cleaning and Room make-up
20		Casual	Assisted in the front office, the kitchen and with cleaning