

NTP 064 – Nick Henderson HOLI 189

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

**(NTP-064)**

### **LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR NICK HENDERSON**

Please note that all documents referred to in my answers have been provided to the Board in electronic format. Where I refer to documents I describe them by reference to the file names of the documents in the electronic file the hotel has provided to the Board.

1. *What is your title and role at Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport?*

I am the General Manager of the Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport.

I am responsible for managing all aspects of hotel operations including the day to day management of the hotel.

2. *What is your relevant employment background and work history?*

I have worked in the hospitality industry for nearly 30 years. During the past decade I have worked in senior management positions for the Holiday Inn Group in England & Australia. Prior to being appointed General Manager of the Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport I was the General Manager of the Holiday Inn Cairns Harbourside between October 2017 and February 2020.

3. *To whom do you report?*

I report to [REDACTED] who is the Regional General Manager for Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania.

### **Involvement of Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport in the Hotel Quarantine Program**

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

The hotel had provided hotel accommodation services for various departments of the Victorian Government including the Department of Defence and the Department of Health. The hotel has also provided accommodation for State Government ministers and parliamentarians.

In the past the hotel has had preferred accommodation contracts with the Department of Defence and has ongoing agreed contracted rates with the Victorian State Government and WOAG (Whole of Australian Government).

The hotel has hosted numerous meetings at our onsite function facilities for various branches of the State and Federal governments, including:

- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Agriculture

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- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Primary Industry and Resources
- Department of Social Services
- Department of the Environment and Energy

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?*

The Hotel first became aware of the Hotel isolation program on 25 March 2020 when it received an email from the Industry Accommodation Association of Australia seeking expressions of interest from members who might wish to participate in the program.

I refer to the document “*Expression of Interest for Victorian Members*” which is document “*HOLI 188*” in the file of documents the hotel has produced to the Board.

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

28 March 2020.

7. *When was the agreement formalised in writing?*

28 March 2020.

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?*

There were no discussions or negotiations regarding the above matters. The government requirements were set out in the terms of the agreement the hotel entered with the government. I refer to document “*HOLI 011 “Terms and Conditions*” which is document “*HOLI 011*” in the file of documents the hotel has been produced to the Board.

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

Yes.

On 28 June 2020 the number of contracted rooms increased from 135 rooms to 153 rooms

On 1 July 2020 the government department responsible for administering the hotel quarantine programme was changed from the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions to the Department of Health and Human Services.

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.*

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Yes, the Hotel is continuing to provide hotel accommodation for quarantine purposes.

### Total quarantine guests at your hotel

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

8 April 2020.

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

The details of guest numbers are as follows:

(a) 14 Day Quarantine –	846 guests
(b) Transitioning Guests (ie. guests who stayed one, two or three nights before travelling to another country with exemption)	96 guests
(c) Guests who stayed one night after completing quarantine at another Hotel	385 guests

13. *How many guests tested positive for COVID-19?*

3 guests tested positive for COVID-19.

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

Any guest who tested positive for COVID 19 was transferred safely and very quickly to an alternative location.

I am not aware of any different arrangements being made for guests displaying symptoms of COVID 19. The government arranged for nurses to be stationed at the hotel who provided nursing care for the guests in quarantine.

### The physical environment of the hotel

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

The hotel is a tri-arch design and has 207 rooms over 8 floors. The lobby, bar, restaurant and meetings rooms are located on the ground floor as well as the staff corridor, some offices and the hotel kitchen.

Floor 1 has multi-purpose use including bedrooms, guest laundry, gym and Hotel offices.

Floors 2-8 are all of a symmetrical layout with only minor changes to inventory on the 8th floor.

A floor plan is attached.

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.

All areas of the hotel were used except floors 7 and 8 in some way for the quarantine programme as shown on the attached plans.

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17. How was each relevant area of your hotel used?

The following areas were used for the purposes as described:

**Lobby** – used for check-in and check-out;

**Restaurant** – used at a later date for check-in and check-out;

**Tullamarine Function Room** – Government Room including: Department of Health and Human Services Team Leader, Authorised officer, Primary Care Assistants, Dnata Staff, Department Jobs Precincts and Regions Site Manager;

**Sunbury & Melrose Function rooms** – Food and beverage staging area for quarantine guest food;

**Rooms 105, 106, 113** – Nurses' Rooms

**Rooms 107 – 108** - Security break room

**External courtyard** – Fresh air walks

**Level 1** – used for guests who had completed quarantine elsewhere and had been approved as a Hardship case and were permitted to stay until able to catch their flight

**Levels, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-** used for quarantine guest rooms

**Levels 7 and 8** – used for other Hotel guests

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

The following restrictions and requirements applied:

- (a) all new arrivals were required to wear masks when checking in and out;
- (b) all staff were required to wear masks during check in and check out;
- (c) guests in quarantine were not permitted to leave their room without authorisation from the Authorised Officer;
- (d) staff were required to dispose of all PPE in the area where the relevant task was completed before leaving the area;
- (e) all staff were required to wear masks when entering the quarantine floors;
- (f) all hotel and government staff were required to complete health questionnaires before starting their shifts. This requirement was introduced by the hotel leadership team on 3 June 2020;
- (g) all staff were required to use the relevant PPE applicable for the different tasks to be performed in each area.

#### **Communication and information sharing**

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

The lines of communication were as follows:

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- (a) **Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions** -communication was by telephone and email with relevant contacts and by shared excel document;
- (b) **Department of Health and Human Services** – communication was by telephone and email with relevant contacts and during daily meetings at the hotel.

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

I refer to my answer to question 21.

21. How did you receive that information?

The hotel received the following information regarding guests by the means described:

- (a) the hotel would sometimes receive the flight manifest prior to arrival to assist with the check in process;
- (b) the hotel received the dietary requirement questionnaires supplied by the Department of Health and Human Services;
- (c) the hotel was informed verbally if a guest tested positive to COVID-19;
- (d) the hotel was informed via email or verbally regarding the movement of guests or if the guests had any further requirements relating to their food/welfare etc.

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

The hotel provided the following reports to the relevant government departments:

- (a) a daily guest list was maintained on the property management system;
- (b) a daily update was provided relating to room availability;
- (c) Dietary requirement information as to the dietary requirements of all quarantine guests was collated and reported;
- (d) details of the availability of special needs rooms on the 1st Floor was kept up to date and reported via a shared excel document.

### **Direction and Decision Making**

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

Our contacts at the Department of Health and Human Services were:

- (a) ██████████ – Contracting Contact;
- (b) ██████████ – Senior Food Safety Officer

The Hotel's contact with the Department of Health and Human Services was mainly through discussions with team leaders and officers from the department who were stationed at the Hotel.

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?*

The terms and conditions of the agreement between the Government and the Hotel continued after responsibility for administering the hotel quarantine program was given to the Department of Health and Human Services.

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The Department of Health and Human Services provided the written directions, guidelines and advice contained in the following documents which the Department provided to the Hotel:

- (a) *“Procedure for provision of food to guests with food allergies V2 (1)”* which is the document reference *“HOLI 163”* in the documents the hotel has produced to the Board;
- (b) *“Cleaning Quarantine and Quarantine Red Hotels 16062020”* which is document reference *“HOLI 003”* in the documents the hotel has produced to the Board.

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

The Department of Health and Human Services did not give the Hotel any written notification of any changes to the terms of the agreement or the procedural guidelines referred to above.

The DHHS infection control team visited the Hotel on 3 occasions and the Hotel implemented any suggestions made by them.

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

The Hotel dealt with the following officers from the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions:

- (a) ████████ – Logistics/Allocations;
- (b) ████████ - Logistics/Allocations;
- (c) ████████ - Site Manager;
- (d) ████████ – Site Manager;
- (e) ████████ - Site Manager; and
- (f) ████████ – Contracting/info

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?*

The Hotel was requested to provide an evacuation plan including which incorporated the government’s guidelines. The officer who requested the plan was Andrew Whitbourn.

The plan is the *“Hotel Evacuation Plan 2020 V1”* which is document *“HOLI 192”* in the documents the hotel has produced to the Board.

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

No.

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

No.

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### **Involvement of Hotel Staff**

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

Apart from members of staff that were stood down on Jobkeeper all of the Hotel staff were involved in the quarantine program. The Hotel can provide a list of the names of all of its staff if that would be of assistance to the Board.

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

The roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the quarantine program were as follows:

- (a) General Manager – day to day leadership of the hotel team and operations, stakeholder management and communication;
- (b) Front Office team – check in and check out of quarantine guests, telephone reception duties, security and crisis management, communication with onsite/offsite government representatives;
- (c) Housekeeping team – coordination of cleaning non- COVID positive rooms, linen drop, collection of rubbish and dirty linen, cleaning of high touch public areas;
- (d) Chefs & Stewards – food management and preparation of all meals in house;
- (e) Food and Beverage Team – food management, contactless delivery of meals for guests in quarantine, communication with onsite Government representatives;
- (f) Maintenance Team – day to day maintenance of the hotel;
- (g) Human Resources – communication and support to hotel team;
- (h) Commercial Team – contracting and daily communication to quarantine guests.

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

No.

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

No.

### **Training and Supervision**

34. What (if any) training was provided to your staff by any government department regarding COVID19 and how to work in a safe manner?

No training was provided to any hotel staff by any Government department. All staff training was conducted by the Hotel.

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

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The Hotel provided Covid19 Hotel Information Booklet training to all employees between 16 March 2020 and 19 March 2020. The Hotel repeated staff training in May 2020 when information was updated.

I refer to the document “COVID 19 Hotel team - Information Booklet May 26th 2020” which is reference “*HOLI-158*” in the documents the Hotel has produced to the Board.

The Department of Health Covid19 information for hotels and hotel staff statement was distributed to all employees. Updated versions of the statement including the versions dated 12 March 2020, 27 March 2020, 28 April 2020 were also distributed to hotel staff. As an example I refer to the “Dept of health covid19 information for hotels and hotel staff 27.03.2020” which is the document reference “*HOLI-158*” in the documents the hotel has produced to the Board.

Frequent in-house training sessions were also held for staff members on working safely during the COVID 19 pandemic. I refer to the documents reference “*HOLI-134*” to “*HOLI-157*” inclusive which are examples of the records kept of staff training and include attendance sheets signed by staff.

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

I personally lived on site at the Hotel and was available 24 hours per day 7 days per week from February 2020 until 25 May 2020.

The members of the Hotel Leadership Team were all available during their shifts.

The operational shift leader of each department was also present.

The various members of the 24 hour Duty Manager Team were also available during their shifts.

#### **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

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

The Hotel acquired substantial quantities of PPE and provided all of its staff with surgical masks, gloves, gowns and eye protection. Hand sanitising stations were also set up.

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

The Government did not provide PPE to Hotel staff and did not need to because the Hotel provided its staff with PPE.

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

No.

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

The Hotel also conducted staff training which covered the information contained in the Covid19 Hotel information booklet. A copy of the booklet was provided to all staff. The booklet included information and directions in relation to the cleaning of rooms. Specific directions were given as and when required.



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In April 2020, during the first week of the programme, the nurses on site provided training to all staff and security staff in relation to all aspects of PPE.

The Hotel also conducted staff training on the wearing of masks in accordance with Government requirements which commenced on 23 July 2020. I refer to document “*HOLI-193*” which is the Victorian requirements relating to masks.

The Hotel implemented procedures for the delivery of meals to guests in quarantine which were incorporated into its standard operating procedures. I refer to document “*HOLI 195*” which is the standard operating procedure relating to the delivery of meals to guests in quarantine.

The Hotel implemented procedures for checking in guests in quarantine, which were also incorporated into its standard operating procedures. I refer to document “*HOLI 194*” which is the “*Quarantine Check In - Survey Procedure*” which detailed the standard operating procedure for checking in guests in quarantine.

Hotel staff were trained in the hotel’s standard operating procedures.

Appropriate signage was also installed throughout the Hotel.

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

During the first week after Department officials were stationed at the Hotel, nurses who were assigned to the Hotel by the Government provided Hotel staff with personal training on the proper fitting and use of PPE.

General PPE training commenced in June 2020. Staff were distributed information issued by IHG and training sessions were conducted by myself as General Manager, the Hotel staff Supervisor, and the Health and Safety representative.

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

No.

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

No.

### Complaints and concerns

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

The Hotel Leadership Team.

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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?

The quarantine program at the Holiday Inn Tullamarine operated safely and successfully.

Staff were regularly asked to provide feedback, comments and suggestions on Hotel operations and they did so. Where appropriate the suggestions were adopted.

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

The Hotel Leadership Team.

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?

In April 2020 the Hotel received a complaint from a food and beverage attendant who had travelled in an elevator with a housekeeping trolley containing rubbish. The attendant mistakenly believed the rubbish was from a quarantine room. It was explained that the rubbish was from a non-quarantine room and that that quarantine room rubbish was taken in different trolleys. Following this complaint, the Hotel introduced maximum occupancy limits for elevator passengers and in all staff areas.

The Hotel conducted a health and safety survey of its staff on 18 June 2020 to ascertain whether staff had any concerns or suggestions regarding the operating procedures relating to operating procedures for the quarantine programme. The details of that survey are set out below:

Concern/ Systems	Action
A staff member was concerned that quarantine rooms may have Covid in them after the 14 day quarantine period.	The Hotel provided full PPE for HSK staff to use when cleaning rooms occupied by guests who had left after completing their 14 day quarantine and being cleared by Vic Health. The HSK Manager reassured staff during briefings that these guests had been cleared.
A staff member requested that more hand sanitiser and gloves be made available.	Additional sanitiser pumps were provided throughout the Hotel and staff were given further directions as to how to access the hotel's supply of gloves.

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A staff member suggested housekeeping trolleys should stock hand sanitiser for use by the room attendants.	Hand Sanitiser was supplied on all housekeeping trolleys.
A staff member reported that staff had run out of masks during a shift and that the supervisor did not know where the mask supply was stored.	The supervisor was instructed as to where to locate the back-up supplies of PPE.
The housekeeping team requested a better quality glove be provided, similar to those used by nursing staff.	The hotel ordered a supply of higher quality gloves.
A Food and Beverage attendant requested that guests be reminded to wait 30 seconds before opening their door to receive meal deliveries.	All guests had been advised on check in and in the guest arrival letter.
A staff member suggested the Hotel limit the use of cash and accept cards only.	This was implemented at the Vargas Bar.
A staff member reported that security staff were not social distancing from each other in the foyer at handover.	The matter was immediately brought to the attention of the security supervisor on site who communicated this to his team.

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]

Hotel management identified the instances of poor conduct explained below. The Hotel did not receive notice of any poor or unacceptable conduct.

49. If so:

(a) what were the details including when notifications were made;

(b) how were those issues dealt with; and

(c) what was the outcome?

Additional information

On 27 April 2020 a guest was taken from the hotel to hospital in a manner which did not comply with the agreed process. Details of this incident are set out in document "HOLI 187".

As the Hotel is a COVID 19 international traveller quarantine hotel, on occasion guests are required to be removed from quarantine rooms and taken to hospital. Due to poor communication between the Department of Health and Human Services and the security team arranged by the Government, a guest was brought down before operations were made

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aware. As a result, the guest came within close proximity of a Team Member, [REDACTED]. Although the guest was wearing PPE and there was a very low chance of contamination, [REDACTED] was not wearing PPE. Understandably, [REDACTED] became distressed due to the possible risk of infection. I took the breach of procedure very seriously and following the incident, I arranged a meeting between myself, an authorised officer of the Department of Health and Human Services, a nurse representative and the security supervisor. The incident was discussed in detail and I outlined my concerns. Agreement was reached on how to address the issue and ensure it did not happen again and a standard operating procedure for the movement of guests was created and distributed to all relevant and responsible parties. The guest concerned subsequently tested negative for COVID 19.

I refer to document "*Transferring clients to hospital - Holiday Inn process (1)*" which is document "*HOLI044*" in the documents produced to the Board.

50. If you wish to include any additional information in your witness statement, please set it out below

No



Nicholas Henderson

17/08/2020