

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

STATEMENT OF MINA RAFIK RAMZY ATTALAH

1. What is your title and role within United Risk Management Pty Ltd?

I am the Managing Director of United Risk Management Pty Ltd (**United**). United is wholly owned and operated by me.

2. What is your relevant professional background and work history?

In 2009, I obtained a Certificate III in Security Operations (including First Aid and Responsible Service of Alcohol) and a Certificate III in Crowd Control. I am currently completing a Diploma of Management.

I have held a Private Security Individual Operator Licence since 2012, having first obtained such a Licence in 2005.

My work history can be summarised as follows:

Period	Employer	Role held
2004 - 2008	MG Security Services	Director, Operations Manager and Crowd Controller
2008 - 2011	ISS Security	Customer Relations Officer, 2IC at Melbourne Airport
2011 – 2012	Commonwealth Bank of Australia	Customer Service Representative, Airport West branch
2011 – 2013	TIC Group Pty Ltd	Gatehouse Manager – Logistics
2013 – 2017	TNT Express	Owner Driver and Team Leader – Transport
2012 – current	United Risk Management Pty Ltd	Managing Director

United Risk Management Pty Ltd

3. When was your business first licensed as a private security business in Victoria?

United was first licensed as a private security business in Victoria on 16 November 2012.

4. What are the usual services provided by your business?

United is in the business of providing security and cleaning services. Approximately 80% of United's business relates to the provision of security services for major events in Melbourne.

5. What is your business' usual client profile?

Most of United's security work is obtained through its relationship with MSS Security Pty Ltd (MSS). United provides security guards to MSS to work at major events in Melbourne, including but not limited to the Australian Open, the Formula 1 Grand Prix, the Melbourne Cup Carnival and the Royal Melbourne Show.

6. To what extent, prior to the Hotel Quarantine Program, had your business provided security services to the Victorian government, whether directly or via subcontracting or labour hire arrangements?

Prior to its involvement in the Hotel Quarantine Program, United had not provided any security services to the Victorian government, whether directly or via subcontracting arrangements.

7. On what basis (employee/contractor/other) do you engage staff to perform security services?

United has a core workforce of employees, which it supplements with contract labour from time to time.

8. How many permanent employees did you have as at 27 March 2020?

As at 27 March 2020, United had 38 permanent employees.

9. Which office holders within your business themselves hold private security licences?

As the sole director of United, I hold a Private Security Individual Operator Licence.

10. How do you ordinarily recruit staff?

United recruits security guards by recommendations from existing staff or by the placing of online advertisements on seek.com.au or gumtree.com.au.

11. Are staff employed or engaged by your business under any restriction on accepting work from other security businesses?

Both employees and contractors may work for other security businesses. United's workflow fluctuates and is seasonal, which makes this necessary.

Your company's involvement in the Hotel Quarantine Program

12. At which hotels, and for which government security contractor, did your business provide security staff? For each hotel please include details of the time period within which you provided security staff.

United provided security guards to MSS through a subcontracting arrangement for the Hotel Quarantine Program conducted at the following hotels:

- (a) Travelodge, Docklands: from 10 April 2020 to 25 April 2020; and
- (b) Stamford Plaza Hotel, Melbourne: from 30 April 2020 to 25 June 2020.

13. When and how did your business first become aware that there was to be a role for private security companies in the Hotel Quarantine System?

On 6 April 2020, I received an email¹ from [REDACTED] Service Delivery Coordinator – Major Events at MSS, advising that MSS had been able to secure Hotel Quarantine Protection work. [REDACTED] email stated that MSS “*could possibly require staff as soon as the next 12-24 hours that’s how short the possible notice and timeframes given are*”. The email asked me to let MSS know if United was interested in the work and if so, an idea of the number of guards it would be able to supply, noting that most sites required between 25 and 35 guards, 24 hours a day.

On or about 7 April 2020, I received a follow up telephone call from [REDACTED], Business Manager Event Services at MSS. I indicated that United would be interested in assisting with the Hotel Quarantine Program.

Shortly after our phone conversation, I received an email from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which set out some details regarding the requirements for the Travelodge job and attached a proposed roster for completion by United.

14. When and how did your business first reach an agreement to participate in the provision of security services in the Hotel Quarantine Program?

During our telephone conversation on 7 April 2020, I agreed with [REDACTED] that United would participate in the provision of security services in the Hotel Quarantine Program by supplying security guards to MSS.

15. When was that agreement formalised in writing? If you had agreements with more than one of the government-contracted security companies, give details of all agreements.

United and MSS are parties to a Security Services Subcontract dated 15 August 2019³, pursuant to which MSS engaged United to provide the Services referred to therein.

On 10 June 2020, I received a letter by email⁴ from MSS which relevantly stated that “in April 2020, MSS entered into a Purchase Order Contract for the provision of certain COVID-19 related services for the State of Victoria acting through the Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions”.

The letter:

- (a) stated that it attached a redacted copy of the Purchase Order Contract; and
- (b) asked me to sign and return a duplicate copy, confirming that I had reviewed the Purchase Order Contract and warranting that United would comply with all applicable provisions of the Contract, including the audit related requirements set out in clause 7.

I signed and returned a duplicate copy of the letter to MSS on 10 June 2020⁵.

United did not have agreements with any government-contracted security companies other than MSS with respect to the Hotel Quarantine Program.

¹ URM.0001.0001.0004

² URM.0001.0001.0007

³ URM.0001.0001.0002

⁴ URM.0001.0001.0198, URM.0001.0001.0113

⁵ URM.0001.0001.0199

16. What precisely were the security services you agreed to provide under each agreement?

United agreed to provide security guards to MSS for use in the Hotel Quarantine Program according to MSS's requirements.

17. When and how [if at all] were you first provided with the terms of the head contract entered into by the government contractor with whom you had made an agreement to provide security services?

On 10 June 2020, I received an email from MSS which attached a copy of the Purchase Order Contract between the Victorian government and MSS⁶.

18. Did you engage subcontractors or labour hire companies to provide any of the security services you had contracted with the government contractor to provide? If so, give details of -

- (a) **the firms engaged;**
- (b) **the hotels at which those firms provided services; and**
- (c) **the dates on which those firms provided services.**

United did not engage any firms of subcontractors or labour hire companies to provide any of the security services it had agreed to provide to MSS.

The hotels at which your business provided security services**19. For each hotel at which your business provided security services, please state –**

- (a) **the number of persons rostered to each shift;**

Travelodge: 5 guards for day shift (0700 – 1900), 14 guards for night shift (1900 – 0700)

Stamford Plaza: 25 guards for day shift (0700 – 1900), 28 guards for night shift (1900 – 0700)

- (b) **the number of shifts per day; and**

Travelodge: 2 operating shifts per day

Stamford Plaza: 2 operating shifts per day

- (c) **the duties of the staff rostered for each shift**

Travelodge: United's guards were given floor duties (guarding exit points from the hotel).

Stamford Plaza: United's guards were given a mixture of floor duties (guarding exit points from the hotel) and relieving duties (escorting guests from their rooms for cigarette and exercise breaks, providing comfort breaks to guards on floor duties and delivering food to guest rooms (1 guard only)).

In addition, all guards assisted guests to check in and move their belongings to their rooms upon arrival from the airport.

⁶ URM.0001.0001.0198

20. Did the numbers of persons and shifts or the nature of the duties change over time? If so, please detail the nature of those changes.

There were 2 operating shifts per day at the Travelodge and the Stamford throughout the Hotel Quarantine Program.

The number of guards supplied by United for each shift changed constantly according to the number of guests staying in the hotels. Sometimes MSS gave United 24 hours' notice to provide additional guards. On other occasions, MSS would ask for additional guards to be provided on a couple of hours' notice.

There were no changes to the duties required to be undertaken by the guards over time.

21. How were decisions made about the number of staff to be rostered on?

MSS had responsibility for determining how many guards were to be rostered on at a particular time. If the number of guards increased or decreased, they would communicate this to me and I would find additional guards or adjust the roster as and when required, but I wasn't specifically told on each occasion why the numbers had increased or decreased. It was my understanding that the number of guards required fluctuated over time depending on the number of guests staying at the hotels.

22. What licences were the staff you engaged or authorised to be engaged required to hold in order to be engaged? What records were kept of those licences?

Each of the security guards supplied for the Hotel Quarantine Program was required to hold, and did hold, an Individual Operator Licence. Each guard was required to carry their Licence with them when attending work and presented this when checking in for their shift. In addition, United maintained records of the Licences held by its security guards.

Training and Supervision

23. What if any training was provided to your staff by DHHS, DJPR or any other government department regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner?

To my knowledge, no training was provided to my staff by DHHS, DJPR or any other government department regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner prior to the commencement of the Hotel Quarantine Program at Travelodge or the Stamford Plaza.

██████████ a security guard employed by United who undertook day shift relief duties at both the Travelodge and the Stamford Plaza, has informed me that approximately two weeks after the commencement of the Hotel Quarantine Program at Stamford Plaza, a DHHS nurse delivered a short demonstration to a small number of security guards regarding how to properly wear a face mask. To my knowledge, this demonstration was only given to those security guards who had responsibility for escorting guests from their rooms for cigarette and exercise breaks, and not to all guards who were working at the hotel.

24. What if any training was provided to your staff by the government contractor that engaged you regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner?

To my knowledge, no face-to-face or on-site training was provided to my staff by MSS regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner prior to the commencement of the Hotel Quarantine Program at Travelodge or the Stamford Plaza.

The initial email I received from MSS regarding the Hotel Quarantine Program⁷ contained the following statement:

In (sic) you are interested, to prepare for potential work we would encourage you to get your staff ready by having them complete the Compulsory Online Induction. Please find link attached <https://covid-19training.gov.au/index.html>. (We would need a copy of this sent with the roster so best to get them to send this to you asap).

I ensured that all security guards supplied to MSS by United completed the Compulsory Online Induction and obtained copies of the certificates of completion from each guard⁸.

Separately to training, it is my understanding that MSS provided instructions and on-site briefings to security guards with respect to the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE), obligations regarding social distancing and general shift duties.

25. What if any training did your business require your own staff to undergo regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner? In your answer please make any necessary distinction between:

(a) Staff directly engaged by your business; and

I ensured that all security guards supplied to MSS by United completed the Compulsory Online Induction and obtained copies of the certificates of completion⁹. Whilst it was intended that all security guards should complete the Compulsory Online Induction prior to commencing work on the Hotel Quarantine Program, this wasn't always possible due to the last minute nature of the work.

With respect to working in a safe manner, when attending the Stamford Plaza at shift changeover, I made sure that United's security guards had access to PPE for that shift and that they were wearing their PPE correctly.

No other training was provided to security guards by United. United has provided security services to MSS via a subcontracting arrangement since 2015. In my experience working with MSS, it is normal practice for MSS to deliver and facilitate any required training for a particular event. This would usually occur by way of a meeting with management prior to the commencement of the work, and a training module being delivered to all guards working at the event. To my knowledge, no meetings or training modules were arranged

⁷ URM.0001.0001.0004

⁸ URM.0001.0001.0003, URM.0001.0001.0005, URM.0001.0001.0006, URM.0001.0001.0009, URM.0001.0001.0010, URM.0001.0001.0011, URM.0001.0001.0016, URM.0001.0001.0020, URM.0001.0001.0043, URM.0001.0001.0056, URM.0001.0001.0063, URM.0001.0001.0064, URM.0001.0001.0065, URM.0001.0001.0066, URM.0001.0001.0067, URM.0001.0001.0068, URM.0001.0001.0069, URM.0001.0001.0070, URM.0001.0001.0071, URM.0001.0001.0072, URM.0001.0001.0073, URM.0001.0001.0074, URM.0001.0001.0075, URM.0001.0001.0076, URM.0001.0001.0077, URM.0001.0001.0078, URM.0001.0001.0079, URM.0001.0001.0080, URM.0001.0001.0081, URM.0001.0001.0082, URM.0001.0001.0083, URM.0001.0001.0084, URM.0001.0001.0085, URM.0001.0001.0086, URM.0001.0001.0087, URM.0001.0001.0088, URM.0001.0001.0089, URM.0001.0001.0090, URM.0001.0001.0091, URM.0001.0001.0092, URM.0001.0001.0093, URM.0001.0001.0094, URM.0001.0001.0095, URM.0001.0001.0096, URM.0001.0001.0097, URM.0001.0001.0098, URM.0001.0001.0100, URM.0001.0001.0101, URM.0001.0001.0102, URM.0001.0001.0103, URM.0001.0001.0104, URM.0001.0001.0106, URM.0001.0001.0107, URM.0001.0001.0110, URM.0001.0001.0128, URM.0001.0001.0176.

⁹ Ibid.

by MSS in respect of the Hotel Quarantine Program, presumably because the work was obtained and arranged at short notice.

(b) **Staff engaged by subcontractors and labour hire companies.**

Not applicable.

26. What onsite supervision was in place for your business' security staff at each hotel? Was that supervision provided by you or by the government contractor that engaged you?

MSS had responsibility for supervising United's security staff at both the Travelodge and the Stamford Plaza. A site supervisor was rostered on each shift. To my knowledge, the day supervisor was an MSS employee and the night supervisor was a Security Hub employee (Security Hub being another firm who provided services to MSS via a subcontracting arrangement).

Although I attended the Stamford Plaza for each shift changeover during United's involvement in its Hotel Quarantine Program, I had no supervisory role on site and was not rostered to work on site. I attended in an administrative capacity in order to ensure that United's security guards were properly signed on and wearing the correct PPE.

27. In cases where some of the staff on duty at a hotel quarantine site were engaged by your business, and some by the government contractor:

(a) **Which business or person had responsibility for onsite supervision?**

MSS had responsibility for on-site supervision at the Travelodge and the Stamford.

(b) **Which business had responsibility for PPE?**

MSS had responsibility for distributing PPE to security guards rostered on-site. PPE was provided by DHHS. MSS had its own supply of PPE for distribution to security guards in the event that the DHHS-supplied PPE ran out.

28. In cases where all of the security staff on duty were engaged by your business, did your business provide onsite supervision?

Not applicable.

29. If you engaged further subcontractors or labour hire companies, what role did they play in supervision of the staff provided by them?

Not applicable.

Rosters and salary arrangements

30. Who in your business was responsible for the recruiting and rostering of staff?

I am responsible for recruiting and rostering United's staff.

31. How were the staff you provided for the quarantine program sourced and recruited?

More than half of the security guards supplied for the Hotel Quarantine Program had already worked for United previously prior to the commencement of the Program. In order to recruit additional security guards as demand for services increased, I relied on recommendations from United's existing security guards and placed an online advertisement on gumtree.com.au.

32. What factors were relevant to how frequently staff were rostered on?

The rosters were drawn based on MSS' notified requirements regarding numbers, which I understood to be based on how many guests were staying in the hotel at a particular time. I had a core group of experienced security guards who had worked for United previously who I rostered on for regular shifts ahead of guards I had less experience working with.

33. What records were kept of hours worked?

The rosters maintained by United¹⁰ show the hours which were worked by security guards at the Travelodge and the Stamford Plaza. The rosters were marked at the commencement of each shift to record that a guard had attended for duty and should be paid for those hours.

34. What were the applicable hourly rates of pay for the security staff you provided?

Security guards who were employed by United on a part-time or casual basis were paid in accordance with the Security Services Industry Award 2020. The standard hourly rate under that award is \$21.90 per hour. Security guards who provided services to United via a contract arrangement were paid a flat rate of \$27 per hour and \$32 per hour on public holidays.

35. How were security staff paid?

United's security guards were paid by electronic funds transfer into their nominated bank account.

36. To your knowledge were any security staff engaged by you at one hotel quarantine site also working at any other hotel quarantine site and/or for other security contractors?

To the best of my knowledge, none of United's security staff were working at more than one hotel quarantine site at a time. Some of United's security guards worked at both the Travelodge and the Stamford Plaza.

I am aware that some of United's security guards also worked in the Hotel Quarantine Program being run at the Crowne Plaza in late March/early April 2020, prior to United becoming involved in the Hotel Quarantine Program. This engagement was via another security contractor.

37. What if any fee or remuneration was paid to your company in addition to the actual salary costs of the staff you provided?

I charged MSS an hourly fee for each security guard provided for the Hotel Quarantine Program, as notified to ██████████ in a Schedule of Rates sent to him on 8 April 2020¹¹. Those rates were as follows:

Monday to Friday: \$39.75 per hour	Saturday: \$48.25 per hour
Sunday: \$60.50 per hour	Public holidays: \$72.00 per hour

¹⁰ URM.0001.0001.0017, URM.0001.0001.0021, URM.0001.0001.0028, URM.0001.0001.0044, URM.0001.0001.0053, URM.0001.0001.0059, URM.0001.0001.0061, URM.0001.0001.0105, URM.0001.0001.0109, URM.0001.0001.0127, URM.0001.0001.0135, URM.0001.0001.0156

¹¹ URM.0001.0001.0197

Personal protective equipment

38. What PPE was provided by your business for staff use?

United did not supply any PPE to its security guards. Arrangements were in place for PPE to be provided by DHHS and/or MSS.

39. What PPE was provided by the government contractor to your business' security staff for use?

It is my understanding that MSS had a supply of face masks, rubber gloves and hand sanitiser available on-site in the event that the PPE supplied by DHHS ran out.

40. What PPE was provided by DHHS or any other government department?

It is my understanding that DHHS provided face masks, rubber gloves and hand sanitiser to United's security guards working at the Travelodge and the Stamford Plaza.

41. Were your staff at any time required to provide their own PPE?

No, United's security guards were not required to provide their own PPE.

42. What training was given to your staff regarding the correct use of PPE? Who provided that training?

As stated in response to Q 23 and 24, to the best of my knowledge, the only training which was provided to United's security guards regarding the correct use of PPE was:

- (a) a short demonstration to a small number of escort security guards at the Stamford Plaza regarding how to properly wear a face mask, delivered by a DHHS nurse; and
- (b) the Compulsory Online Induction, the link having been provided to United by MSS.¹²

In addition, I am aware that DHHS made available at the Stamford Plaza a document titled 'Operation Soteria: PPE Advice for Hotel-Based Security Staff & AOs in Contact with Quarantined Clients'¹³. I was provided with a copy of this document by one of United's security guards.

I am also informed by some of United's security guards that the advice regarding the use of PPE was subject to change over time, and as a result was, at times, confusing.

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

I am aware that there was a shortage of PPE in respect of that supplied by DHHS at the Stamford Plaza, such that MSS had to activate and distribute its back-up supply. MSS' supply was, to my knowledge, plentiful and there was no actual shortage experienced.

44. What if any arrangements were in place at the hotels for which you had responsibility for temperature checking of security staff? Who instituted and monitored any such arrangement?

To my knowledge, no temperature checking of security guards occurred at either the Travelodge or the Stamford Plaza.

¹² URM.0001.0001.0004

¹³ URM.0001.0001.0196

Complaints and concerns

45. Who was responsible for identifying and acting on instances of poor or unacceptable conduct by your security staff?

MSS and Security Hub were responsible for supervising shifts on-site. Accordingly, any problems would be reported to the shift supervisor from those organisations in the first instance. To the extent that I was made aware of poor or unacceptable conduct by United's security staff by MSS, I was responsible for dealing with those matters.

46. Who was responsible for identifying and acting on complaints or concerns regarding unsafe work conditions for your security staff?

MSS and Security Hub were responsible for identifying and acting on complaints or concerns regarding unsafe work conditions in their capacity as shift supervisors on-site.

47. Did your business identify or receive notice of poor or unacceptable conduct by any of your security staff? How were those issues dealt with?

United did not receive notice of any unacceptable conduct by any of its security guards throughout the duration of the Hotel Quarantine Program.

48. Did you terminate the services of, remove from site, or otherwise take action against any and which of the security personnel you engaged directly for unsatisfactory performance of their duties at quarantine hotels? If yes provide details of:

- (a) who was so terminated, removed or acted against and when; and
- (b) the nature of the unsatisfactory behaviour concerned.

None of United's security guards were terminated, removed from site or had action taken against them for unsatisfactory performance of their duties during the Hotel Quarantine Program.

49. Did your business identify or receive notice of unsafe work conditions for your security staff? How were those issues dealt with?

On 11 June 2020, I received an email from one of United's security guards¹⁴ with respect to a complaint regarding the work practices of another (non-United) security guard working at the Stamford Plaza. The complaint was in respect of that guard not practising social distancing upon greeting guests and not wearing a face mask.

Upon receiving the complaint, I sent a copy to ██████████ at MSS for action. ██████████ responded to advise that he had forwarded it on for a response and would get back to me as soon as possible.¹⁵ I did not receive a further response from ██████████, however I believe that this issue was overtaken by the events which occurred in the following days (see further below).

Did any security staff employed or engaged by your business contract COVID-19 in the course of their work in the Hotel Quarantine Program? If so,

- (a) what were the circumstances in which they came to contract it;

Seven of United's security guards contracted COVID-19 during the course of the Hotel Quarantine Program at the Stamford Plaza. It is not possible for me to state with any

¹⁴ URM.0001.0001.0111

¹⁵ URM.0001.0001.0122

precision the circumstances in which those guards came to contract COVID-19, however I am aware of the following relevant matters:

- (i) the Security Hub guard referred to in paragraph (b) below worked at the Stamford Plaza on 14 June 2020 and car-pooled to work that day with one of United's security guards. He wore a face mask during the car trip to work;
- (ii) the Security Hub guard worked on the same floor as two of United's guards that day. Those two guards later contracted COVID-19; and
- (iii) I am not aware as to the circumstances in which the remaining United guards who contracted COVID-19 may have contracted it. However, at the conclusion of the day shift on 14 June 2020, the three guards on that floor were replaced by three night shift guards (one of whom worked for United) and to my knowledge, all three of those guards subsequently contracted COVID-19.

(b) how and when did your business become aware of it; and

On or about 15 or 16 June 2020, I received a telephone call from one of United's security guard who advised me that she had just seen a Facebook post from a Security Hub guard who also worked at the Stamford Plaza which stated that he was in hospital with symptoms of COVID-19.

(c) what steps were taken by your business in response?

Immediately after concluding the telephone call referred to in (b) above, at 10.00pm that day, I attempted to contact two MSS representatives by telephone to discuss the matter, but was not able to reach anyone.

The next day, there were discussions between all relevant stakeholders and COVID-19 testing was arranged for all security guards who had been working at the Stamford Plaza.

I suggested to the MSS supervisor at the Stamford Plaza that we should consider temperature checking security guards prior to the commencement of each shift. To my knowledge, that suggestion was not implemented, but the Program at the Stamford Plaza ceased a short time afterwards.

Additional information

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

Not applicable.

Dated: 17 August 2020

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Mina Rafik Ramzy Attalah