

Tuesday 18.08.2020

My Name is Robert Bruno Paciocco and I am a director of Black Tie Security Pty Ltd.

I have received an email from lawyers@quarantineinquiry.vic.gov.au at 1559hrs on Monday the 17th day of August 2020 requesting I provide a statement to answer 50 questions.

The Notice requests that Black Tie Security produce all relevant documents to the Inquiry by 17:30pm on 24th August 2020.

The notice is signed by the honourable Jennifer Coate AO (Board of Inquiry into COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Program)

This is a further request to all the information I emailed the inquiry on Sunday the 9th day of August 2020 and again on Tuesday the 11th day of August 2020.

Below are the questions the inquiry wishes to have answered along with my answers below them.

I do believe that many of these questions have been answered in my previous two emails but I understand there must be colossus of information of documents and responses the inquiry have received and this will assist in making things clearer when requiring information.

1. What is your title and role within Black Tie Security?

I am a director at Black Tie Security Pty Ltd.

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

I have 30 years' experience in the Security Industry from retail covert loss prevention and investigations, retail loss prevention management to crowd control, close personal protection, and large event management. I was also a Multi-state Security manager for Myer Stores Ltd responsible for VIC/TAS/WA & SA. I started Black Tie security in 2014 whilst still at Myer Stores Ltd and left my position as a Multi-state manager with Myer in January 2018.

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

January 2014.

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

Our company specialises in corporate security, high end events, crowd control, close personal protection, and investigations.

We also provide our services at Latrobe university Bundoora campus for special events, Collingwood football club and requested for special events through the City of Melbourne such as Melbourne fashion week, comedy festival and coronial inquiry into mental health.

4. What is your business's usual client profile?

Our usual client profile is the higher end of the security market. Our clients require security to be the first point of contact for their guests so they understand we must pay our team appropriately, so they get what they require. That is a guard that looks good in a fitted suit, smells good, can communicate well with guests, and can deal with any situation or incident that may occur during the event.

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?

We have provided our services to the City of Melbourne as a subcontractor of Securecorp who currently hold the contract. We looked after all events that required suit work at the Melbourne Town Hall. Securecorp then gave us the Melbourne City council meetings every Tuesday evening led by then Lord Mayor Robert Doyle and later appointed Lord Mayor Sally Capp. Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, ministers and public attended these meetings at Council Chambers at the Melbourne Town Hall. Securecorp then extended our services to the City library, Docklands library on a regular weekly basis and some adhoc work across Melbourne. Unfortunately I walked away from this work as I was asked to come down in my weekday rates. As my wife was working full time on Securcorp work orders alone and we were only making a 6% profit margin, it did not make good business sense to drop our margin. Securecorp will still use us when their budget allows for example, we provided the team for the coronial inquiry into mental health last year and received great feedback.

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

Employees, but if we get a late withdrawal or are extremely busy and do not have the staff available we use one Subcontractor.

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

Approximately 25.

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

Myself, my wife [REDACTED], Glendon Evans (Also company director) and his wife [REDACTED].

10. How do you ordinarily recruit staff?

Team members usually contact us via our website or phone because of word of mouth.

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

No. The majority of our people will only work for us as they are paid correctly and enjoy the work we do but we do not restrict them from working for other companies as all of our work is adhoc and we cannot provide them with full time employment.

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.

The Pullman Hotel. Wilson Security. Thursday the 28th of May 2020 until Sunday the 5th of July 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?

It was approximately late March 2020 but I declined the offer from Wilson as only 3 of my regular staff were interested in doing the work. I also contacted my subcontractor who told me that they have the numbers but not the quality of staff that Black Tie Security expect.

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

It was following a telephone call with Wilson in late May. As it was a phone call, I do not have the exact date but we commenced on Thursday the 28th day of May 2020.

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.

I signed a subcontractor declaration form and scanned it back to Wilson on the 8th of July 2020 (I have already emailed that attachment to you on Sunday the 9th of August 2020) but I did not sign a formalised agreement for the hotel quarantine work. The reason I did not sign is because I received the document on Thursday the 2nd of July 2020. The document was 78 pages long and this agreement should have been sent to me prior to undertaking any work at the Pullman hotel. I have emailed you this attachment also and my response in my email sent to you on Sunday the 9th of August 2020.

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

Black Tie provided manpower in Black suits, white shirt, black tie, black polished shoes for 12 hour shifts. 0630 to 1830 and 1830 to 0630.

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?

I received an email from Wilson on Thursday the 2nd of July 2020. This is the agreement I did not sign and I replied to the agreement by email on Wednesday the 15th of July 2020.

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?

Yes.

If so, give details of -

(a) the firms engaged;

Advanced Protective Services.

(b) the hotels at which those firms provided services; The Pullman Hotel.

and

(b) the dates on which those firms provided services.

The 28th of May 2020, through to Sunday the 5th of July 2020.

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;

(b) the number of shifts per day; and

(c) the duties of the staff rostered for each shift.

I have included all the shifts along with names of guards and rates in my email sent to you on Sunday the 9th of August, 2020. The attachments are under APS shift coverage. There is also an attachment titled [REDACTED] Payslip. [REDACTED] is the only direct Black Tie Security team member who worked any quarantine shifts.

The duties for each shift included the following.

On levels of hotels guards were briefed to patrol the floor and listen out for any patrons being too loud or trying to leave their room.

Front door included temperature checking everybody that entered the hotel including staff, doctors, nurses etc.

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.

We commenced with 10 guards by 24 hours but approximately a few days in this changed to 4 guards by 24 hours. Duties did not change.

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

Wilson would either call me direct or send an email.

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?

All staff were required to hold a Victorian private security individual licence. All guard names, security licence details and expiry dates were sent to Wilson.

Training and Supervision

23. What if any training was provided to your staff by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) or any other government department regarding COVID-19 and how to work in a safe manner?

Training was provided by a Wilson supervisor.

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?

Wilson provided a module from the government website to which all guards had to get 100% on their first shift. Post that all staff were required to attend a Wilson briefing 15 minutes prior to commencing any shift.

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

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

Wilson provided a module from the government website to which all guards had to get 100% on their first shift. This applied to all the subcontractors I used and to my own team member. Post that all staff were required to attend a Wilson briefing 15 minutes prior to commencing any shift.

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

There was a Wilson supervisor on site for all shifts at the Pullman Hotel.

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

(a) which business or person had responsibility for onsite supervision? Wilson Security.

(b) Which business had responsibility for PPE? Wilson Security.

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

Wilson Security provided supervision for all security staff engaged.

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

I phoned and spoke to all staff rostered for quarantine work at the Pullman hotel. I would also text detailed reminders prior to each shift to the subcontracted team members from APS and my own staff. Wilson provided the supervision of all male and female guards we supplied.

Rosters and salary arrangements

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

Our team members have contacted us via our website, phoned through because they have heard of our company or employed via recommendations from friends or associates. We have never advertised for staff. My wife [REDACTED] and myself look after the rostering.

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

I provided one of my own team members and the others were recruited by sub-contractor [REDACTED]

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

Hours were a factor as they were 12 hour shifts.

33. What records were kept of hours worked?

All records along with team member details are attached in email I sent you on Sunday 9th of August 2020 under APS shift coverage register and there is also an attachment of Black Tie direct team member [REDACTED] shifts attached.

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

Award rates. All records along with team member details are attached in email I sent you on Sunday 9th of August 2020 under APS shift coverage register and there is also an attachment of Black Tie direct team member [REDACTED] shifts attached.

35. How were security staff paid?

Monthly and Electronically. All invoices also attached in email I sent to you on Sunday the 9th of August 2020.

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?

No, they were not.

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

No fee or remuneration was paid to Black Tie Security in addition to the actual salary costs of the staff we provided.

Personal protective equipment**38. What PPE was provided by your business for staff use?**

No, Wilson Security provided all PPE equipment.

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

Yes, Wilson Security provided all PPE equipment.

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

None to my knowledge.

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

No. There were always ample amounts of PPE on site at the Pullman hotel.

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

It was covered off in a module guards all had to do on their first shift and covered off by a Wilson supervisor at the start of each shift in the briefings.

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

No. There were always ample boxes on site and guards were able to change their face masks every few hours.

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?

There were always guards at the entry. Guards were responsible for conducting temperature checks for all guards. There was a nurse on site who would temperature check other nurses and doctors (any medical staff) and sign them in.

Complaints and concerns

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

Wilson security supervisors.

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

Wilson Security. I spoke to many of the guards during our time at the Pullman hotel and all enjoyed the work.

47. Did your business identify or receive notice of poor or unacceptable conduct by any of your security staff?

Nothing serious at all. I had one guard arrive late for a briefing. Another phone call I received was regarding a guard wearing black runners with his suit.

How were those issues dealt with?

Immediately. I would call the guard direct.

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.

I did remove one guard during our time at the Pullman. The guard failed to stand up and get off his chair when the lift doors opened on his level and other guards got out to escort new guest arrivals to their room.

49. Did your business identify or receive notice of unsafe work conditions for your security staff?

No.

How were those issues dealt with?

50. 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;

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

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

No security staff employed or engaged by our business contracted COVID-19 in the course of their work in the Hotel Quarantine Program.

Additional information

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

Respectfully,

Rob Paciocco
Director

Black Tie Security Pty Ltd.

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