

**PAEC – Inquiry into the Victorian Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
HEARING, 26 August 2020**

Questions on Notice taken by Dr Emma Cassar, Commissioner, Corrections Victoria

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Ms VALLENCE: **What is the number of staff hired, Commissioner, and total staff budget for the hotel quarantine program under Corrections Victoria management?**

Dr CASSAR: The total staff numbers—are you talking about resident support workers?

Ms VALLENCE: The total number of staff hired and the total budget specifically for the hotel quarantine program under Corrections Victoria management.

Dr CASSAR: I will have to confirm the numbers: 497 residential support workers who have been recruited at a rapid rate for our step in of security and supervision from the period of 2 July to 11 July.

QoN Response:

Note: *a transmission or transcription error appears to have occurred in respect of Dr Cassar's response.*

The suspension of inbound international flights has provided an opportunity to reset the program for mandatory quarantine for returned travellers. Since assuming responsibility for aspects of that program and in the delivery of other COVID-19 accommodation programs, as at 26 August 2020, 1,498 Resident Support Officers and team leaders had been recruited and trained, including staff from Corrections Victoria, the Department of Justice and Community Safety, and external organisations. In addition, Victoria Police is providing resources in support of programs under Operation Soteria.

As at 31 July 2020, which is the most recent data available, the Department had incurred \$7.12 million in costs related to employee and miscellaneous costs, uniforms and personal protection equipment.

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Ms VALLENCE: **And how many prison officers, either public or private, have been seconded to work into Victoria's COVID quarantine hotels?**

Dr CASSAR: We had around 100 staff that were taken into the hotel quarantine program to provide that expertise and leadership going into supervision functions. During this time we have sent about 60 per cent back to Corrections Victoria, noting that there is the gap around the two-week safe period to ensure that we are not contaminating workforces.

Ms VALLENCE: So the specific number if you could provide that on notice to the committee.

QoN Response:

The suspension of inbound international flights has provided the opportunity to reset the program, including the recruitment and training of staff. As at 26 August 2020, 91 prison staff and 9 community corrections staff were employed as Residential Support Officers or Team Leaders in the mandatory hotel quarantine program. As the numbers requiring accommodation in Operation Soteria hotels have reduced, 64 prison staff have been

temporarily returned to duty in Victorian prisons after carrying out a 14-day quarantine period. All prison staff are Corrections Victoria employees working in Victoria's public prisons.

Ms HENNESSY: And of course, Ms Vallenge, the important point is flights being suspended at the moment, so it is also about planning for the future once international flights resume at some point in the future.

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Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, Attorney. We are just after the numbers. **Commissioner, since Corrections Victoria assumed management of the hotel quarantine program, how many guests have there been across all facilities?** I understand there has been less staff, but just how many guests in total have been under management since Corrections Victoria have taken over?

Dr CASSAR: We would have to come back to you with the figures for hotel quarantine.

Ms VALLENCE: On notice, that would be great.

Dr CASSAR: Yes, of course.

QoN Response:

Corrections Victoria progressively commenced supervising residents in hotel quarantine on 2 July 2020, with department-contracted private security ceasing supervision by 11 July 2020. The department assumed full operational responsibility for the hotel quarantine program, and for COVID-19 positive residents in hotels under the Emergency Accommodation Program, on 27 July 2020.

For the period 27 July 2020 to midday 24 August 2020, 245 guests have been accommodated in hotels in the mandatory quarantine and community emergency accommodation programs.

During the period, 39 returned travellers and support people have entered hotel quarantine, including 20 after arriving into another Australian port of entry on compassionate grounds (such as for major surgery or a funeral), 4 parents meeting an unaccompanied minor arriving from overseas, and 15 maritime crew immediately transiting out of Australia.

In addition, 206 community members who are COVID-19 positive or close contacts and unable or unable to safely self-isolate have been accommodated in quarantine hotels under the Emergency Accommodation program of Operation Soteria.