

Response from an ABC spokesperson:

The issue of exactly how 2700 passengers came to be allowed to disembark from the Ruby Princess is complex.

The ABC has applied the best journalistic principles and ethics in seeking answers and accountability for a debacle that caused at least 662 COVID-19 infections and 28 deaths.

Political Editor Andrew Probyn was diligent in his research for this story, including asking detailed questions of the relevant authorities before publication and including their responses in order to give audiences the fullest picture we can.

Examining the role played by the Australian Border Force was obviously a key area of inquiry, given Prime Minister Scott Morrison's statement on 15 March, four days before the ship docked, that: "Where we have Australians on cruise ships, then there will be some bespoke arrangements that we put in place directly under the command of the Australian Border Force to ensure that the relevant protections are put in place."

An ABF officer, as instructed by his supervisor, went on board the Ruby Princess about the same time as a Department of Agriculture representative, to "investigate information about ill passengers on the Ruby Princess and to provide a report". [NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian](#), among others, reportedly believed the ABF was directly responsible for the fiasco.

Probyn's reports on the direct involvement of the ABF officer, including the officer's misinterpreting passenger lab tests of negative influenza results as meaning negative COVID-19 results, are based on the Commonwealth's submission to the Special Commission and documents obtained under Freedom of Information.

Bret Walker in his report finds the ABF officer's error was a "striking one to have made" but reached the conclusion it was NSW Health that ultimately granted the Ruby Princess "pratique" – a quaint term that hides a plain meaning: "permission for a ship to enter a port, embark or disembark".

The ABC's reporting made clear NSW Health had made a fundamental mistake by giving the Ruby Princess a "low risk" rating. But our reporting focuses on the issue of a practical, not necessarily formal, granting of pratique — that is, who said the passengers were allowed to get off?

We stand by the integrity of the reporting and encourage people to [read](#) and [watch](#) the key reports.