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# Covid 19 coronavirus: Ruby Princess mistake caused infection cases to explode

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Napier mayor urges calm after Ruby Princess cruise. Made with funding from NZ On Air.

news.com.au  
By: Vanessa Brown



It was the "disastrous" decision that has now caused a total of 440 people to catch the deadly Covid-19 virus. Now, that toll could get much worse.

The "disastrous" choice allowed 2700 people to disembark from the Ruby Princess cruise ship in Sydney on March 19, despite a number of cases confirmed on board.

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The move has been considered one of the biggest debacles NSW has made during the fight against coronavirus, and a mistake Premier Gladys Berejiklian said will not happen again after introducing a ban on cruise ships docking anywhere in NSW.

The Ruby Princess cruise ship coronavirus cluster is still incubating in the community, more than 10 days after thousands of passengers were allowed to disembark from the virus-infected ship.

"Everyone is worried about the Ruby Princess and ... you may see a surge about 14 to 20 days after the Ruby Princess arrived back (on March 19)," ABC health broadcaster Dr Norman Swan told news.com.au.

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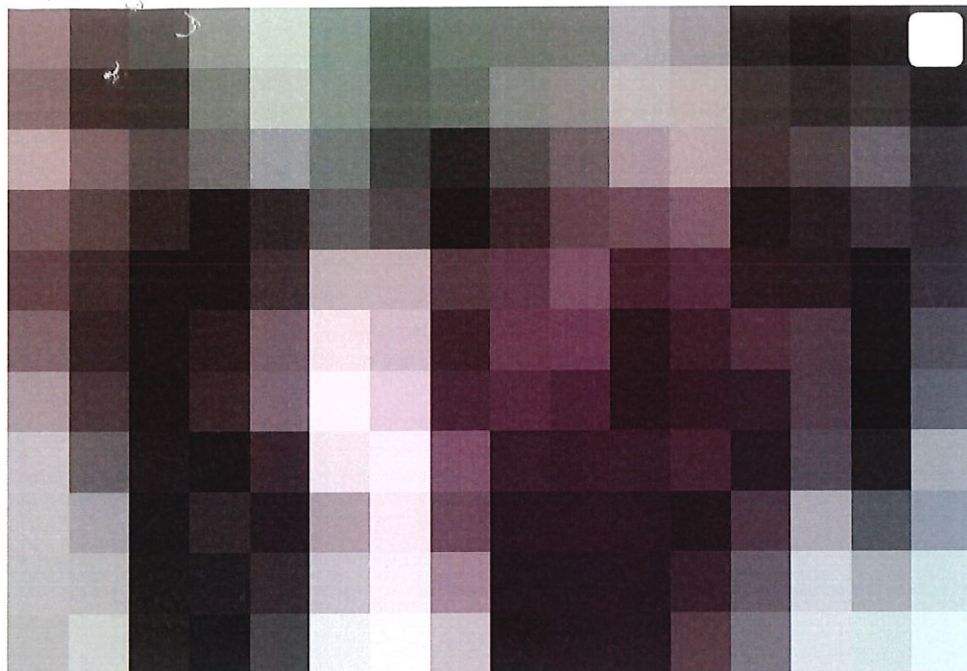


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Australian Border Force officers talk with New Zealand passengers from the Vasco Da Gama cruise ship before checking in for their Air New Zealand flight to Auckland. Photo / Getty Images

"By that calculation, the second infection wave would happen between April 3 and April 9."

Despite Ms Berejiklian taking measures for everyone who left the ship to be contacted by health authorities, those people may have infected others – and that's a number we are still yet to see.



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Of the 20 deaths recorded across Australia, at least five have been passengers from the Ruby Princess cruise ship.

According to The Guardian, 211 positive coronavirus cases in NSW were from the Ruby Princess, as well as 71 in South Australia, 70 in Queensland, 43 in Western Australia, 22 in the ACT, 18 in Victoria and two in the Northern Territory.

The 437 infections from the cruise is close to 10 per cent of the total cases in Australia that is approaching 5000.

Last week, Australian Border Force commissioner Michael Outram pointed the finger at NSW Health as being responsible for allowing passengers to disembark without being tested for the deadly virus.

"New South Wales Health was advised that passengers were isolated with flu-like symptoms," he said last week.

"On March 18, the Department of Agriculture informed through Ruby Princess that a risk assessment had been conducted, and that it was low risk.



The President of Carnival Australia, who owns Ruby Princess, has asked if the ship can remain within Australia waters. Photo / News Corp Australia

"They (NSW Health) had given clearance for all passengers to disembark the vessel. That red light has just gone green."

Outram said because the health department deemed the ship as "low-risk" it was allowed to dock into Sydney's Circular Quay on March 19.

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"As a result of that information, all of the passengers were given a green light to disembark."

Overnight, the President of Carnival Australia Sture Myrmell begged Australian federal and state governments to allow the Ruby Princess to stay within proximity to Australian shores for the safety and health of crew on board.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Myrmell called on federal and state governments to allow the repatriation of crew currently on board who were not needed to run the ship efficiently. To date, cruise ships remain a leading source of infections in New South Wales.

On Sunday, three sick crew members on board the cruise ship were rescued and rushed to Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital after suffering from respiratory symptoms.

Since the rescue, Carnival says they want to send home any crew member who is not

required for the safe running of the ship.

"Being able to send home those crew members who are not required for the safe operation of the ship is the right thing to do both from a humanitarian point of view and Australia's international standing as a maritime nation that looks after foreign nationals in its care," Myrmell said.

"We are particularly concerned that a humanitarian approach should be taken in relation to the crew on Ruby Princess, which has left NSW territorial waters as demanded by the NSW Government.

"We remain concerned that it is not safe for the ship to sail away from Australia while there are crew members on board who are ill."

• [Covid19.govt.nz: The Government's official Covid-19 advisory website](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/)

#### HOW DID PASSENGERS LEAVE THE SHIP?

Passengers who have left the ship on Thursday, March 19, 2020 say they were not told that anyone on board presented any symptoms during the voyage.

Elisa McCafferty, an Australian woman who flew home to London with her husband immediately after disembarking from the ship, told the BBC nothing was said at any time about anyone being sick on board.

"It was a distinct lack of information coming through from Princess the entire time," she said.

"I turned on my phone and I started getting all these notifications from people back in Australia saying 'there's been confirmed cases on the Ruby'.

"And I was just absolutely petrified. We had just been on two full flights – what if we had infected someone?"

Another passenger, Bill Beerens who lives in Sydney, tested positive for the virus the day he disembarked.

"I think that they let us down," Beerens told the ABC.

"I do honestly believe that they (cruise ship management) knew what was going on and they just wanted us off the boat."

## COVID-19 UPDATE

### GLOBAL STATUS

**62,094,130**  
cases

**39,750,058**  
recovered

**1,449,709**  
deaths

**2053** New Zealand cases **1959** recovered **25** deaths

Last updated: Sun 29th November at 1:51 pm [Go here to see all our Covid-19 data](#)

#### HOW DID THE 'DISASTER' HAPPEN?



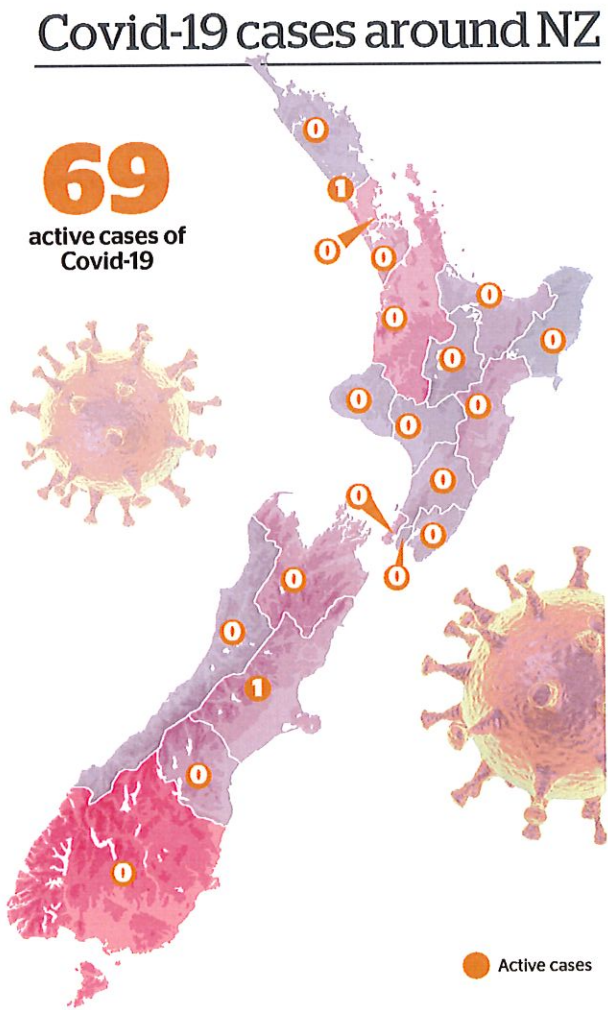
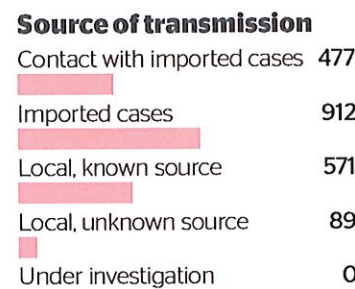
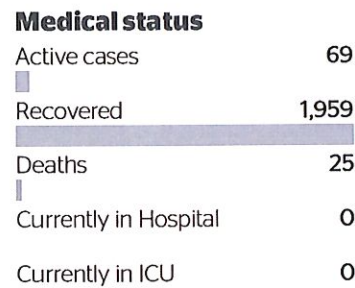
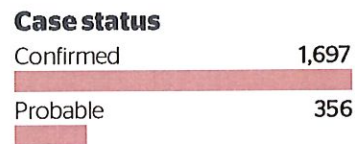
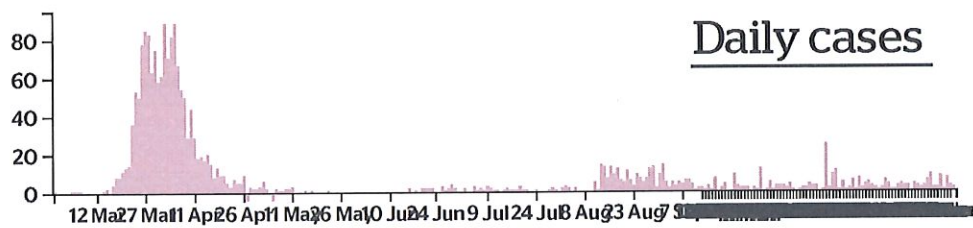
After setting off on an 11-day voyage on March 8, the ship was forced to return to Sydney early after a handful of passengers started to feel unwell with respiratory symptoms.

It is understood those who presented with an illness had swabs taken for Covid-19, however other passengers were not informed.

As a result, thousands were allowed to leave the ship on March 19, travelling on board public transport, and onwards to other Australian states and even internationally.

Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan lashed NSW's handling of the Ruby Princess cruise ship for allowing passengers to disembark in Sydney.

McGowan told reporters on Sunday that while NSW had people coming off ships and able to roam in Sydney, his state managed the docking of MSC Magnifica into Fremantle quite differently.



Herald Network Graphic

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