



NEW SOUTH WALES INDEPENDENT CASINO COMMISSION

**THE INQUIRY INTO THE STAR PTY LTD & THE STAR
ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LIMITED**

**PUBLIC HEARING
DAY 3**

WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2024

INQUIRY BEFORE MR ADAM BELL SC

COUNSEL ASSISTING:

MR C. CONDE WITH MR D. HABASHY AND MS E. HALL

**MR B. WALKER SC WITH MR I. AHMED SC, MR D. WONG AND MR H.
ATKIN FOR THE STAR PTY LTD AND THE STAR ENTERTAINMENT
GROUP LIMITED**

DR J. RENWICK SC WITH MS J. ROY FOR WITNESS ROBERT COOKE

**MR R. HARRIS FOR WITNESSES CHRISTINA KATSIBOUBA AND
BETTY IVANOFF**

MR D. MITCHELL FOR WITNESS GEORGE HUGHES

Any person who publishes any part of this transcript in any way and to any person contrary to a direction against publication commits an offence against section 143B of the Casino Control Act 1992 (NSW)

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION RESUMED AT 10.02 AM

MR BELL SC: Mr Walker, in the early hours of this morning, the solicitors for The Star entities sent to the solicitors assisting me quite a large number of documents, some of which relate to Ms Katsibouba. They ought to have been produced in answer to summons 26-03-2024(2) on or before 3 April 2024 at 5 pm. They have been produced two weeks late at a time when Ms Katsibouba's examination is at an advanced stage. The covering letter from the solicitors for The Star entities provided no explanation for the failure to comply with the summons.

I do understand that everyone is operating under significant time pressures, but I would be grateful if you could convey to your clients that if they are in breach of the summons, I would appreciate the courtesy of an explanation so I can form a view of whether an offence has been committed under section 8 of the Royal Commissions Act. I will now need to adjourn this hearing, at considerable expense to all concerned, so that Counsel Assisting have a reasonable opportunity to assess these documents and the effect they might bear on the examination of Ms Katsibouba.

I will now adjourn. I will notify you when Counsel Assisting is ready to proceed.

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION ADJOURNED AT 10.04 AM

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION RESUMED AT 11.40 AM

MR BELL SC: Yes, Mr Conde.

MR CONDE: Ms Katsibouba -

MR AHMED SC: I'm sorry, Commissioner, just before Mr Conde starts, could I just raise two matters?

MR BELL SC: Of course.

MR AHMED SC: The first is I'm instructed to offer an unreserved apology for the late production of the material. That should not have occurred and we regret that it has occurred. We have certainly heard what you have said, Commissioner, in terms of an explanation and a statutory declaration is being prepared in that regard at the moment and we expect to be able to provide that to the inquiry shortly.

The second matter that I wish to raise is that Mr Walker had a pre-existing commitment so he is unable to appear for the rest of today, so I will be appearing instead.

MR BELL SC: Yes, thank you very much, Mr Ahmed. Yes, Mr Conde.

<CHRISTINA KATSIBOUBA, ON FORMER AFFIRMATION

<EXAMINATION BY MR CONDE

5 **MR CONDE:** Ms Katsibouba, can you hear me?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, I can.

10 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall you were asked questions by Mr Walker yesterday about the agreement reached between Star and you for your departure?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, I do.

15 **MR CONDE:** And do you recall you accepted that resignation had less payment than a mutual separation?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

20 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall you then had this exchange, which I will read aloud. Mr Walker said:

25 "There's a radical difference, to your mind, between the unilateral choice to resign by you alone, regardless of what the company thought, and an agreement between you and the company under which, as you understood it, there would be a considerable financial advantage to you over resignation. You knew all that, didn't you?"

And you said:

30 "Only during the process. I didn't know that in the beginning."

Do you recall that exchange, Ms Katsibouba?

35 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** I recall that exchange.

MR CONDE: I will show you a document, STA.8517.0059.7237. And this, Mr Bell, will need to be MFI5, I believe, or 4.

40 **MR BELL SC:** MFI5.

MR CONDE: Has that come up for you, Ms Katsibouba?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

45 **MR CONDE:** Do you see an email at the bottom from Mr Cooke to Mr Hammond dated 13 March 2024 at 4.56 pm, where he wrote:

"Tell CK I am happy to have a chat Friday when I am back in Sydney if it helps."

Do you see that?

5

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: Then Ms Hammond replied, on 13 March 2024 at 5.56 pm, with an email that begins:

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"Yes, helpful, as she is now seeking resignation."

Do you see that?

15

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: Then there are two options listed and then it says, just under the numbered paragraph 2:

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"In both instances, she forfeits any potential FY24 STI cash payment."

Do you see that?

25

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: Then it says:

"I have spoken to her about this forfeit and she is fine. She wants to resign even if it is option 1."

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Do you see that?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

35

MR CONDE: And is it correct, as best you can recall, that Ms Hammond had correctly recorded your position as communicated to Ms Hammond as at 13 March 2024?

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MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: And was it explained to you why there might be a difference between either resignation or some kind of contractual termination?

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MS KATSIBOUBA: Very broadly, it was around certain discretion that the board had in the event that it was a resignation versus some sort of contractual separation.

MR CONDE: But is this correct? As at 13 March 2024, conscious of the financial difference at that stage of your negotiations with Star for your departure, you were nonetheless resigning?

5 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Now, quite apart from how your departure was contractually recorded following negotiations and by agreement, you initiated your departure, didn't you?

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MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, I did.

MR CONDE: And conscious of a potential financial detriment, you were still proceeding with the resignation if that proved necessary. Is that correct?

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MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: So the fact is, whatever might have been negotiated over time, you had resolved to go and it was your decision to initiate that process. Is that correct?

20

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: If I can show you another document, STA.8126.0001.3212. Ms Katsibouba, has that email come up for you?

25

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, it has.

MR BELL SC: Mr Conde, will that need to be marked for identification?

30 **MR CONDE:** Yes, it will. I think MFI6.

MR BELL SC: Yes, MFI6.

MR CONDE: Do you see an email, Ms Katsibouba, from Mr Cooke to Mr Foster dated 20 March 2024 at - I think it is 4.07 am?

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MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: It says:

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"Hi David, please find attached as discussed proposed arrangements for team members impacted by coming events. There are still some variables for completion."

45 Do you see that?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

MR CONDE: Then at the top of the page, this email was forwarded to Mr Foster on 20 March 2024 at 7 - sorry, forwarded by Mr Foster to directors on 20 March 2024 at 7.44 am. Do you see that?

5 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: Then if we can go over the page, please, to 3213.

10 **MR BELL SC:** Point 3213 is part of MFI6, Mr Conde.

MR CONDE: Mr Bell, I'm told that that actually is a separate document.

MR BELL SC: Okay, I will make it MFI7. Thank you.

15 **MR CONDE:** Thank you. And that document, for the transcript, is STA.8126.0001.3213. Do you see, Ms Katsibouba, there is a heading Proposed Arrangements Other Executives?

20 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: And you are listed down at the bottom of this page. Do you see that?

25 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Now, this is as at 20 March 2024. It says:

"Terminate without cause or resign and pay in lieu of notice."

30 And then that's given. Do you see that?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, yes.

35 **MR CONDE:** So, this still hadn't been settled either way by the 20th, is that correct, whether it was to be a contractual termination or resignation from a legal perspective?

40 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** I mean, I believe so. Just (inaudible) to my earlier comments that I had said to Paula, as noted on the previous page, which is I intended to resign and I had started to go in that direction by the time this conversation happened.

45 **MR CONDE:** Ms Katsibouba, the previous page, I'm sorry, was the one - we can go back to it, but it was the one from Mr Cooke to Mr Foster. That earlier document I showed you was I think - I will just check the date - 13 March 2024, just to be clear. My only question is, is it correct, as best you can recall, that as at 20 March, there were ongoing negotiations whether your exit would be recorded as a contractual termination or a resignation?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

5 **MR CONDE:** Okay. Still if we can stay on this page, back to the 3213 page, please. These are the Proposed Arrangements. Yes. Do you see on the Proposed Arrangements page, the third one down, Mr Giovanni Rizzo is listed as proposed to be appointed as Chief of Staff on the date of the current Chief of Staff's exit. Do you see that?

10 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Now, Mr Rizzo is the person who suggested to you to book the TICO losses against November rather than in June/July, isn't he?

15 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: And were you aware of any proposal that Mr Rizzo be the replacement to Peter Jenkins in late March 2024?

20 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** No.

MR CONDE: Then the next person in that list is Josh Coupland. Do you see that?

25 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: He is proposed to be the Chief of Strategy reporting to the Chief of Staff. Do you see that?

30 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Now, he is the person who you said yesterday put together the board paper for the material project, which I won't name, but you will recall we discussed yesterday.

35 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Mr Bell, those are my questions relating to these documents.

40 **MR BELL SC:** Yes.

MR CONDE: I have one further or maybe two - a few further question to see ask in public session.

45 **MR BELL SC:** Please proceed.

MR CONDE: Ms Katsibouba, do you recall having a discussion with the manager, Mr Weeks, earlier are this year, most likely in March, in relation to your departure?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes, I do.

5 **MR CONDE:** And I want to ask you whether you recall during that discussion saying five separate things, which I will put to you and ask whether you - in each case whether you agree or disagree. So the first is that you said to Mr Weeks that you had been in discussions with Star since December 2023 about leaving. Do you recall telling Mr Weeks that?

10 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: The second thing is that your working relationship with the CEO and the board had deteriorated. Do you recall telling Mr Weeks that?

15 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: The third thing was that you considered the GLT to be dysfunctional and to have been dysfunctional for some period of time. Do you recall telling Mr Weeks that?

20 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: I will come back to that. But the fourth is that you had lost faith and confidence in the integrity of the CEO. Do you recall telling Mr Weeks that?

25 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes.

MR CONDE: And the fifth is that you needed to prioritise your wellbeing and you felt it was the best thing to do to depart. Do you recall telling Mr Weeks that?

30 **MS KATSIBOUBA:** Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: Just on that third issue - third matter that I raised, about you considered the GLT to be dysfunctional, do you recall the reasons why you felt, at that time, that the GLT was dysfunctional?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

40 **MR CONDE:** And what were those reasons?

MS KATSIBOUBA: I touched on them a little bit yesterday, Mr Conde, which is the most important thing for me was the ability and the appetite of that leadership team to discuss and progress an adequate business plan that addresses earnings deterioration and work to reverse that, and I didn't think that the team had the ability or the appetite to do that. Other examples like that were ability to address, for example, the letters that Mr Weeks had sent is another example of that.

MR CONDE: Did you continue to hold that view up to the time that you left, Ms Katsibouba?

MS KATSIBOUBA: Yes.

5

MR CONDE: Mr Bell, those are the only questions I had for this public session. There are some questions relating to confidential material I would like to ask in private, please.

10 **MR BELL SC:** Mr Ahmed, do you have any further questions for Ms Katsibouba in public session?

MR AHMED SC: No, thank you.

15 **MR BELL SC:** Dr Renwick, do you seek leave to ask any questions of Ms Katsibouba in public session?

DR RENWICK SC: No, thank you, Commissioner.

20 **MR BELL SC:** Mr Harris, do you have any questions arising that you wish to put to Ms Katsibouba?

MR HARRIS: No, I don't. Thanks, Mr Bell.

25 **MR BELL SC:** In those circumstances, operator, can we now move into private hearing mode, please?

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION ADJOURNED AT 11.53 AM

30 **<WITNESS RELEASED**

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION RESUMED AT 12.15 PM

MR BELL SC: Good afternoon, Mr Hughes. Are you able to hear me?

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MR HUGHES: I can.

MR BELL SC: Do you have a legal representative here today?

40 **MR HUGHES:** I do.

MR MITCHELL: Mr Bell, if I might announce my appearance. My name is Mitchell. I appear for Mr Hughes instructed by Rosemary Kanan and Stephanie Young of Deutsch Miller.

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MR BELL SC: Thank you, Mr Mitchell. Mr Hughes, would you prefer to take an oath or affirmation, please?

MR HUGHES: An affirmation please.

<GEORGE ROBERT HUGHES, AFFIRMED

5 **MR BELL SC:** Yes, Mr Conde.

<EXAMINATION BY MR CONDE

10 **MR CONDE:** Mr Hughes, may I ask you to state your full name, please.

MR HUGHES: Yes, George Robert Hughes.

15 **MR CONDE:** Are you aware that your address has been made known on your behalf to the solicitors assisting Mr Bell's inquiry? Sorry, Mr Hughes, did you hear my question?

MR HUGHES: I did, and I said I am.

20 **MR CONDE:** Did you commence in Star in late 2017 as their first ever Chief Marketing Officer?

MR HUGHES: I did.

25 **MR CONDE:** Did you then become the Chief Customer Officer?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: When was that?

30 **MR HUGHES:** On 1 August 2023.

MR CONDE: And did you then become the Chief Customer and Product Officer?

35 **MR HUGHES:** No, I was appointed to that role of - it was the Chief Customer and Product Officer role on 1 August 2023.

MR CONDE: I see. What responsibilities did your work as the Chief Customer and Product Officer involve?

40 **MR HUGHES:** My role expanded beyond marketing to include the Premium Services team and the Centralised Gaming Unit.

45 **MR CONDE:** In your role as Chief Customer and Product Officer, were you a member of the Group Leadership Team or GLT?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: Did you report directly to Mr Cooke?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

5 **MR CONDE:** Now, having been at Star since 2017 and, therefore, before Mr Bell's last review, in your opinion, has the culture of Star Entertainment changed since that 2020 review that Mr Bell conducted?

MR HUGHES: To some degree, yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** May I ask you, please, to explain why?

MR HUGHES: Prior to the first Bell Review, there was certainly a culture of profit over compliance. I saw that change in the ensuing period after the Bell Review. I also saw a much deeper appreciation for risk management governance and the importance of culture.
15

MR CONDE: And did you see evolve a culture of fear?

20 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: What do you mean by that?

MR HUGHES: I saw our team members taking their responsibility to return the company to suitability very seriously. And there was a desire and a focus from a lot of our team members to ensure that the business became suitable, and there was a fear about that not happening.
25

MR CONDE: And when you say "team members", are there any particular team members that you have in mind?
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MR HUGHES: In my experience, those individuals who were party to the remediation program took their responsibilities very seriously and they worked remarkably hard.

35 **MR CONDE:** Yes. And who were those individuals, in your experience?

MR HUGHES: It was, of course, a wide array of teams from the Transformation Office into the Risk Compliance teams, Marketing teams and other operational areas.
40

MR CONDE: I see. Was it also people on the GLT?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

45 **MR CONDE:** Mr Cooke?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: And anyone else on the GLT?

MR HUGHES: My colleagues took their responsibility seriously, from all my interactions with them.

5

MR CONDE: Yes. But I was asking about the culture of fear. Did you see that setting in among other members of the GLT?

MR HUGHES: I think it was pervasive. So yes.

10

MR CONDE: Are you aware, Mr Hughes, that the manager, Mr Weeks, prepared two reports in respect of Star dated 3 October 2023 and 24 November 2023 which were provided to Star on 29 November 2023?

15 **MR HUGHES:** I was made aware of that, yes.

MR CONDE: And how were you made aware of that?

20 **MR HUGHES:** Robbie provided an update - verbal update to the team in a team meeting.

MR CONDE: Do you recall roughly when that meeting was?

25 **MR HUGHES:** I don't know the specifics. I think it was around the early part of December.

MR CONDE: And do you recall anyone in that meeting asking to see a copy of the reports?

30 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Who was that?

35 **MR HUGHES:** Betty Ivanoff, the Chief Legal Officer.

MR CONDE: And what, if any, reaction do you recall - did Mr Cooke have to that request?

40 **MR HUGHES:** My recollection is that he declined to share it.

MR CONDE: Right. And do you recall whether he gave any reason for that?

45 **MR HUGHES:** From what I remember, he - he said that it wasn't - he didn't have the authority to share it and it was down to the discretion or determination of the board.

MR CONDE: I see. Have you ever seen a copy of those reports?

MR HUGHES: I have not, no.

MR CONDE: Okay. Is it correct, Mr Hughes, that you resigned from your role as Chief Customer and Product Officer on 29 February 2024?

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MR HUGHES: I think I finalised it on 1 March, from memory.

MR CONDE: I see. Perhaps I will ask a document be brought up. It is STA.8000.0061.0154. Has an email from you dated 29 February 2024 at 7.16 pm with the heading up the top Letter of Resignation come up?

10

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: And do you see in the third paragraph you say:

15

"Please accept this letter of resignation in conjunction with the signed deed."

Do you see that?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

20

MR CONDE: If we can bring that up please. It's STA.8000.0061.0298. Has a document titled Deed of Release dated 28 February 2024 between yourself and the Star Entertainment Group come up for you, Mr Hughes?

25

MR HUGHES: It has.

MR CONDE: And if we can go please to page 0299. Do you see recital B:

30

"The Executive's employment with the Company will cease on the Termination Date on the basis of resignation, on the terms of this deed."

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: I'm sorry, Mr Hughes, I'm not sure if a response -

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MR HUGHES: Yes, I have seen it. I can see it.

MR CONDE: And for the "Termination Date", can we go please to page 0301. Do you see halfway down the page it says:

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"Termination Date means 31 May 2024 or such earlier date concluded between the Executive and the Company ..."?

MR HUGHES: Yes, I do.

45

MR CONDE: And also on this page "Notice Date" a bit further up. Do you see that means 29 February 2024?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

5 **MR CONDE:** If we can go, please, to page 0302. This is the operative clause. Do you see clause 2.1 provides, consistently with the recital B that I showed you earlier, that your employment will cease on the Termination Date?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** And it says that that is on the basis of resignation. Do you see that?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

15 **MR CONDE:** And does that accord with your understanding of the circumstance of your departure, that it was on the basis of your resignation?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

20 **MR CONDE:** And then clause 2.2(a) provides that you will continue to be employed by the company until the termination date except that you would commence garden leave on the notice date. Do you see that?

MR HUGHES: I do, yes.

25 **MR CONDE:** And you remain on gardening leave at the moment; is that correct?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

30 **MR CONDE:** And then do you see clause 2.2(b) says, during your garden leave, from the notice date to the termination date, you will provide the cooperation that is recorded there. Do you see that?

MR HUGHES: I do, yes.

35 **MR CONDE:** Now, Mr Hughes, what were the circumstances that led you to decide to resign?

40 **MR HUGHES:** There are multiple - multiple reasons that led me to resign. The expansion of my role to include additional responsibility put me in a position where I felt the personal risk that I had was outside of my personal risk appetite, and I sought support on that but it didn't materialise. I also was - I was uncomfortable with the lack of progress on important business matters that I didn't see was getting traction or focus, and the workplace environment, I felt, was unsafe and very challenging.

45

MR CONDE: I will just ask you about each of those. First of all, expansion of your role, you mentioned the additional responsibility. Can I just ask you to explain what you meant by that?

MR HUGHES: My role expanded to include two functions. The Centralised Gaming Unit, which is the product side of the casino, and the Premium Services team.

5

MR CONDE: And how, as best you can recall, did that expansion contribute to your desire to want to resign?

10 **MR HUGHES:** In the early days of leading the Premium Services team, I sought to gain comfort around the risk management governance and capability within that team. The team itself was made reference to in the Bell 1 report where there were deficiencies in those areas. And through my initial investigations, I was uncomfortable with the level of maturity and the governance in that area.

15 **MR CONDE:** So Premium Services, is that the - things like the high-roller gaming?

MR HUGHES: It's the team that manages the relationships with VIP guests.

20 **MR CONDE:** Right. And in terms of practices in that team, are you referring to practices relating to vetting of VIPs or something else?

MR HUGHES: No, it wasn't about vetting. It was in relation to the engagement and communication of VIPs.

25

MR CONDE: And what do you mean by that, Mr Hughes, "engagement and communication"?

30 **MR HUGHES:** The team itself was responsible for the portfolio of customers. They would have engagement and manage the customer relationship, so engage with them as they were in our business. So they would send communications and notify the guests of promotions and events that were happening on the property.

35 **MR CONDE:** And what was it about that engagement and those communications that concerned you, as best you can recall?

MR HUGHES: I didn't see that there were a lot of prevention and detection controls in place to adhere to the requirements.

40 **MR CONDE:** And when you say "requirements", which requirements?

MR HUGHES: A range of requirements, including Privacy Act, Spam Act, Casino Control Act.

45 **MR CONDE:** Right. So were you worried that the communications and engagement was too familiar, too friendly, not formal?

MR HUGHES: That there weren't parameters and guidelines, policies, evaluations to ensure that the team was following the approved practices.

5 **MR CONDE:** And when you mention "approved practices", are you referring there to ICMs?

10 **MR HUGHES:** ICMs, but also I would have expected that there were much more prescriptive policies and guidance documents, and they weren't in existence to the specificity that I felt was necessary to manage that function.

MR CONDE: I see. And so coming into this, that was just an area of new responsibility for you and it was a matter of anxiety and concern. Is that correct?

15 **MR HUGHES:** Correct.

MR CONDE: Can you think of any examples, Mr Hughes, of the sort of communications or engagements that would give rise to the sort of concerns you were having?

20 **MR HUGHES:** There were historic practices of sending out group text messages with the inclusion of other people's mobile numbers. So multiple guests could see other people's mobile numbers.

25 **MR CONDE:** I see. And emails as well?

MR HUGHES: Not that I can recall.

MR CONDE: Were the texts using WhatsApp or some other platform?

30 **MR HUGHES:** I'm not entirely sure what the platform was.

MR CONDE: I see. Right. And so it was all - would it be fair to say it was all a bit too casual for your liking?

35 **MR HUGHES:** That's correct, yes.

40 **MR CONDE:** If I can then ask about the second issue you mentioned, that you were uncomfortable with the lack of progress on important business matters. May I ask you, please, to elaborate on what you mean by "important business matters"?

MR HUGHES: I was - I was concerned that there was not enough focus on evolving the business model and re-baselining the cost in consideration of the current trading performance and specifically the need to reduce the cost base to have a viable business.

45 **MR CONDE:** And was that in light of a changed regulatory landscape or expectations?

MR HUGHES: The increase in compliance and, in particular, the increase in exclusions of VIP guests had an impact on the profit base and, as such, there was a need to re-baseline the cost and, in particular, to restructure or reconsider the role of the loyalty program.

5

MR CONDE: And is it correct that you felt that just was not happening?

MR HUGHES: It was very hard to get attention, yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** And did your concerns about that arise in the context of GLT meetings?

MR HUGHES: Yes, and in my interactions with Robbie.

15 **MR CONDE:** Right. I will just come back to that in a second, but I suppose what I am asking is that you are the Chief Customer and Product Officer. So is it correct that in that specific role, you wouldn't have been considering sort of business model-type considerations. Is that correct?

20 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: But in the GLT, you were a member of a team that you would have expected to be considering those matters. Is that correct?

25 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: And then when you mentioned interactions with Mr Cooke, may I ask you, please, to elaborate on that?

30 **MR HUGHES:** In a number of my one-to-one meetings with Robbie, I wanted to engage on the need to restructure the loyalty program and, as a result of that, take out cost. That would have an impact on the business and so required careful consideration and consideration by GLT, the CEO and then the board.

35 **MR CONDE:** I see. And then the third matter you mentioned was workplace environment. You felt it was unsafe and very challenging. May I ask you to elaborate on that, please?

40 **MR HUGHES:** The stresses, pressures and expectations on our team to return to suitability were evident. The company was also dealing with a myriad of complexities, and people felt the pressure. I personally myself saw my colleagues, I saw people more senior and there was, of course, the rest of the team, and I was concerned about the pressure that we were putting on people.

45 **MR CONDE:** Did you observe such pressure on Mr Cooke himself?

MR HUGHES: I did see that Robbie - it took a toll on him, yes.

MR CONDE: And did that in turn - put pressure on other GLT members as well?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

5 **MR CONDE:** And then was the environment - the challenging nature of the environment, as I think you have referred to it, something you observed throughout the organisation?

10 **MR HUGHES:** I think it was more pronounced in the support areas, from what I could see.

MR CONDE: And when you say "support areas", are there particular teams? Or may I just ask you to specify?

15 **MR HUGHES:** So I saw in the Risk Transformation office, the Controls team, the Marketing team.

20 **MR CONDE:** I see. I asked you earlier about whether there had been a change in culture and I think you said to some degree. What do you mean by that qualification of "to some degree"?

MR HUGHES: I still saw a culture of just get it done and maybe not think about the - or not give full consideration to the impact it had on people.

25 **MR CONDE:** All right. Are you able to think of any examples of that, Mr Hughes?

30 **MR HUGHES:** In the lead-up to the Christmas period, there were a number of milestones that were due as part of the remediation program and there was - it was a period that there was very little appetite to have change requests or to miss those deadlines.

MR CONDE: And what, if any, comment do you have on that?

35 **MR HUGHES:** I saw how it impacted people, and it made me feel very uncomfortable.

MR CONDE: What do you think might have been a better approach?

40 **MR HUGHES:** To have much stronger and better engagement with Mr Weeks and the regulator to reprioritise and perhaps re-sequence some of those milestones to ensure that we were not putting undue stresses and pressures on our team members.

45 **MR CONDE:** Yes. Would you agree that, taking a step back, the overall project of remediation is not just a box-ticking exercise?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: And did it feel like it had become that to you?

MR HUGHES: I don't think so.

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MR CONDE: Right. So, it was more the urgency of meeting deadlines. Is that correct?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

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MR CONDE: And did that urgency, to your observation, overtake an emphasis on quality?

MR HUGHES: I don't think so.

15

MR CONDE: So, is it correct, then, that you felt that milestones were being approached in a proper way but it was just the amount of them and the urgency of them. Is that correct?

20 **MR HUGHES:** That is correct.

MR CONDE: Mr Hughes, when did you first notify the company that you intended to resign?

25 **MR HUGHES:** Around the second week of December.

MR CONDE: In 2023?

MR HUGHES: 2023.

30

MR CONDE: Did you speak with Mr Cooke?

MR HUGHES: I did.

35 **MR CONDE:** And is it correct that you told Mr Cooke in December 2023 that you could no longer continue in the role?

MR HUGHES: That is correct.

40 **MR CONDE:** Did you advise him that you felt burnt out and didn't feel that you could continue?

MR HUGHES: I did.

45 **MR CONDE:** What response do you recall Mr Cooke having?

MR HUGHES: Robbie asked me to take the Christmas break, switch off from work, rebuild and then come back in the New Year and if I still felt the same way,

then we could pick back up our conversations. He was very clear that he didn't want me to leave the business but understood how I was feeling.

5 **MR CONDE:** I see. And did he explain why he did not want you to leave the business?

MR HUGHES: I seem to recall him saying that I was his guy.

10 **MR CONDE:** And did you then proceed to spend some time over Christmas reflecting?

MR HUGHES: I did.

15 **MR CONDE:** And what happened then?

MR HUGHES: In - when I came back from the Christmas break, I informed Robbie that I hadn't changed my mind.

20 **MR CONDE:** I see. Do you recall any other discussions regarding the reasons for your departure?

25 **MR HUGHES:** I had requested additional protections related to my broader role and they had been rejected and, from what I understand from Robbie, by the board.

MR CONDE: I see. What protections - additional protections had you requested?

MR HUGHES: I sought a deed of indemnity and a deed of access.

30 **MR CONDE:** And what would have been the purpose of those deeds?

35 **MR HUGHES:** There had been a change in the personal liability for close associates and, from memory, there was a personal liability to the tune of \$1 million and I wanted a deed of indemnity related to that.

MR CONDE: Does this relate back to your concerns regarding additional responsibility that we discussed?

40 **MR HUGHES:** It does.

MR CONDE: I see. Now, the notice date that you might recall from your deed was in February 2024, and I think you said that you told Mr Cooke when you came back from Christmas that you were still going to be resigning. What happened in the intervening time?

45 **MR HUGHES:** He asked me to engage with Paula Hammond, the Chief People and Performance Officer, just on the particulars around it.

MR CONDE: I see. So approximately when did you tell Mr Cooke after the Christmas break that you would be proceeding to resign?

5 **MR HUGHES:** I seem to recall it was around the second week of January.

MR CONDE: So then, between that second week of January and late February 2024, there were discussions about the terms of your departure. Is that correct?

10 **MR HUGHES:** That's correct.

MR CONDE: And that that culminated in the deed that we have looked at a moment ago.

15 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Have any of the non-executive board members approached you to discuss your reasons for leaving?

20 **MR HUGHES:** (Indistinct).

MR CONDE: I'm sorry, Mr Hughes, I'm not sure if your answer came up.

MR HUGHES: No, they didn't.

25 **MR CONDE:** I will show you STA.8000.0061.0156. Do you see a letter from The Star to Liquor & Gaming dated 1 March 2024.

MR HUGHES: Yes.

30 **MR CONDE:** Sorry, it's a letter from The Star. The addressee at the top is the NICC, and then the next person is Liquor & Gaming, and then another person from Liquor & Gaming as well. Do you see that?

35 **MR HUGHES:** I do, yes.

MR CONDE: Do you see there is a notification of what's called a Minor Change in the State of Affairs and it's "Resignation of Mr George Hughes". Do you see that?

40 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR CONDE: And then the second paragraph of the letter:

45 "Mr George Hughes ... has tendered his resignation as the Chief Customer & Product Officer, effective 31 May 2024. Mr Hughes will be placed on gardening leave, effective immediately.

As such, Mr Hughes will cease to be a close associate of The Star."

Do you see that?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

5

MR CONDE: Now, is it correct that during your gardening leave, you don't consider yourself to have been involved in any casino operations?

MR HUGHES: No.

10

MR CONDE: If I can then show you, please, INQ.5002.0001.0116. And has an email come up for you from Mr David Foster to - it says "Office NICC". The subject is "Activities" and the date is 27 March 2024. And do you see that after the salutation, it says:

15

"Further to this mornings meeting we reiterate we are committed to remediating our business an ultimately achieve suitability in time. We acknowledge your frustrations and hope you see through our actions to date we have heard your concerns and are doing whatever is required to regain your trust. We agree that now is time to reset the relationship and we are committed to this.

20

Just to summarise a few of the key actions to date ..."

25 And do you see there is a heading Management Change?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

MR CONDE: It says:

30

"Last Friday terminated without cause CEO Robbie Cooke, CFO, Christina Katsibouba ..."

There is mention of Mr Jenkins. Then it says:

35

"In addition, a longstanding team member George Hughes was also terminated without cause a couple of weeks ago."

Do you see that?

40

MR HUGHES: I do.

MR CONDE: Do you have any comment on that communication, so far as it concerns you?

45

MR HUGHES: It's not accurate.

MR CONDE: And may I ask you why?

MR HUGHES: Because I resigned from my position.

5 **MR CONDE:** And would you agree that it suggests that action was taken in respect of you when, in truth, you initiated your departure?

MR HUGHES: Yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** Mr Bell, I don't have any further questions for Mr Hughes.

MR BELL SC: Mr Hughes, you were a member of the Group Leadership Team from August 2023 until February 2024. Is that correct?

15 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR BELL SC: And it's the most senior management leadership team at Star Entertainment. Is that right?

20 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR BELL SC: And as you understand it, it was because of your membership of that senior management team that you were considered a close associate of The Star Pty Ltd, the operator of the Sydney casino?

25 **MR HUGHES:** Yes.

MR BELL SC: I would like to hear from you your assessment of how well the Group Leadership Team was functioning in the period in which you were a member of it.

30 **MR HUGHES:** I think people were working remarkably hard and they were focused on regaining the trust and suitability of the business. I saw people really commit and work tirelessly to achieve change, but I had also recognised that the leadership team wasn't functioning as optimally as it could have.

35 **MR BELL SC:** Why was that?

MR HUGHES: I don't think Robbie was leading the team as well as he should have been.

40 **MR BELL SC:** I would like to understand why you say that.

45 **MR HUGHES:** It meant discourse on material matters wasn't encouraged. The agreed Group Leadership Team governance, ways of working and meeting protocols had not been fully implemented and that led to, I think, a lack of clear communication, sharing of what was happening in the regulatory environment and a focus on the priority matters for the leadership team - not the individuals but as a leadership team. There was not a lot of time placed on that.

MR BELL SC: Yes, thank you Mr Hughes. Mr Ahmed, do you have any questions for Mr Hughes?

5 **MR AHMED SC:** No, thank you.

MR BELL SC: Dr Renwick, are you seeking leave to ask any questions of Mr Hughes?

10 **DR RENWICK SC:** No, thank you.

MR BELL SC: Mr Mitchell, anything arising? I think you must be on mute, Mr Mitchell.

15 **MR MITCHELL:** Nothing arising, Mr Bell.

MR BELL SC: Mr Hughes, thank you very much for your attendance and for your evidence. I'm very grateful to you. The order that I will make is that your hearing be adjourned, but unless you hear from the solicitors assisting, you won't be required again. Thank you.

<THE WITNESS WAS RELEASED

25 **MR BELL SC:** Mr Conde, who is the next witness?

MR CONDE: Sorry, Mr Bell. I believe it is Ms Ivanoff. Yes.

MR BELL SC: Well, we will turn to Mr Ivanoff at 2 pm. I will now adjourn.

30 **<THE HEARING ADJOURNED AT 12.57 PM**

<THE HEARING RESUMED AT 2.00 PM

35 **MR BELL SC:** Mr Conde, are you calling the next witness?

MR CONDE: Yes, I call Ms Betty Ivanoff.

MR BELL SC: Ms Ivanoff, can you hear me?

40 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, I can Mr Bell.

MR BELL SC: Mr Harris, you are representing Ms Ivanoff?

45 **MR HARRIS:** Yes, that's right, Mr Bell.

MR BELL SC: Ms Ivanoff, would you prefer to take an oath or affirmation?

MS IVANOFF: I will be fine with the oath.

<WITNESS BETTY IVANOFF, SWORN

MR BELL SC: Yes, Mr Conde.

5

<EXAMINATION BY MR CONDE

MR CONDE: Please state your full name.

10 **MS IVANOFF:** Betty Ivanoff.

MR CONDE: Are you aware that your address has been made known on your behalf to the solicitors assisting Mr Bell's inquiry?

15 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, I am.

MR CONDE: Is it correct that you have been admitted as a lawyer for about 25 years?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** That's correct.

MR CONDE: Did you have a short time in private practice initially in personal injury and then at Baker McKenzie in construction?

25 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Did you then move in-house with Sinclair Knight Merz which became Jacobs Engineering?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Is it correct that later you had a number of roles in ASX-listed companies, including CSR, Greencorp and Coca Cola Amatil?

35 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Were you the group counsel at Crown Resorts Limited until October 2022?

40 **MS IVANOFF:** I was.

MR CONDE: Did you work as the Chief Legal Officer at Star Entertainment from May 2023 to 6 March 2024?

45 **MS IVANOFF:** 5 March, yes.

MR CONDE: And your time between Crown and Star was some six months. Was that linked to a non-compete clause?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, it was.

MR CONDE: Right. And so what did you do during that time? Not much?

5

MS IVANOFF: I was renovating an apartment.

MR CONDE: Ms Ivanoff, what did your role as Chief Legal Officer at Star Entertainment involve?

10

MS IVANOFF: It predominantly involved leading the legal affairs of the organisation, being across matters of disclosure, considering all of the litigation and legal claims involving the organisation and its subsidiaries. It also extended to the company secretariat function.

15

MR CONDE: Were you a member of the Group Leadership Team or GLT?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I was.

MR CONDE: And who did you report to?

20

MS IVANOFF: The CEO, Robbie Cooke.

MR CONDE: And what was your experience at Star at the time that you commenced in May 2023.

25

MS IVANOFF: It was probably one of the more difficult starts I have had in or across organisations. I found that while we had six months of planning pre-my start, things like induction, readiness, support were lacking on day 1 and I did find it extremely difficult to get, you know - to really get embedded in the organisation without the right support.

30

MR CONDE: Do you have things like a laptop, phone, email?

MS IVANOFF: Not on day 1. They came subsequently.

35

MR CONDE: Right. And so from an induction perspective, how would you describe your experience?

MS IVANOFF: A little lacking.

40

MR CONDE: Was that the reason that you later resigned?

MS IVANOFF: I would not say that was the reason.

45

MR CONDE: How did you find the Legal team that you led?

MS IVANOFF: I would have to say that I inherited probably one of the best Legal teams I have ever worked with in my career.

MR CONDE: And why is that?

5

MS IVANOFF: I found the team extremely engaged, committed, high levels of integrity and, given what most of them had gone through already with the organisation, the fact that they still came to work and wanted to do the very best they could and held themselves to a very high standard in terms of the advice they gave, I was extremely impressed. I also found them extremely supportive of me, especially given they had so much corporate knowledge that I did not have and so they were very open and welcoming of me.

10

MR CONDE: In terms of your colleagues in the GLT, do you recall soon after starting at Star that you attended a group executive off-site program?

15

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: And when was that?

20

MS IVANOFF: I think it was at the end of my second or third week. So it must have been at the end of May.

MR CONDE: And what do you recall of that experience?

25

MS IVANOFF: Well, I - I did leave at the end of the second day feeling a little underwhelmed.

MR CONDE: And why was that, Ms Ivanoff?

30

MS IVANOFF: Well, in my experience, executive team off-sites are led in a way that boost engagement or focus on matters material to the organisation or its challenges and whilst there was some - some focus and some key takeaways, and I think we also had an external facilitator, I found that the issues or - perhaps I would better describe it as the state of affairs across a very newly-formed executive team were still in the very early stage of maturity.

35

I also felt that there was a lot of emotion in the room, which probably was not that much of a surprise when you enter organisations that have been through what companies like The Star had been through. It's quite expected, but I thought that by the stage I had joined that perhaps some of the ongoing issues would have been dealt with.

40

MR CONDE: And do you recall a GLT meeting - I'm unsure whether it was the program that were you just discussing or a separate one - where Ms Katsibouba, the CFO at the time, spoke to the GLT about financial vulnerabilities at that time and that she felt GLT didn't understand them?

45

MS IVANOFF: Yes, it was the same session.

MR CONDE: Right. And what do you recall of that?

5 **MS IVANOFF:** Well, I think, from what I recall, Ms Katsibouba had expressed a feeling that she was dealing with that on her own and did not want to be feeling that way, that she wanted support and she wanted it raised on the agenda so that we were focused on those issues and those risks together as an executive team.

10 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall saying anything in response?

MS IVANOFF: Not particularly. I remember my feeling or the takeaways that came from that session, but, I'm sorry, Mr Conde, I can't recall whether I said anything in particular that day.

15

MR CONDE: And what were the feelings or takeaways that came from the session that you have just referred to?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** So, I thought her request was very reasonable and I do believe that it formed part of a larger - a larger takeaway, if you like, from that session where a working group would be formed to develop some meeting protocols and a cadence, rhythms that would be more appropriate to an executive team of an ASX-listed company.

25 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall anyone else expressing or saying anything in response to Ms Katsibouba?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** I think I recall that Jessica Mellor and George Hughes were also very supportive of - that it had to be a shared - a shared issue and not one that the CFO was dealing with on her own.

MR CONDE: And was that something with which you agreed?

35 **MS IVANOFF:** Sorry, Mr Conde, I missed that.

MR CONDE: Was that something with which you agreed?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

40 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall anything from Mr Cooke at this meeting?

MS IVANOFF: No, I don't.

MR CONDE: Was he present at the meeting?

45

MS IVANOFF: Yes, he was in attendance.

MR CONDE: But you don't have any recollection of him saying anything to the meeting in response to Ms Katsibouba's concerns?

5 **MS IVANOFF:** Look, I do recall - I do recall that he did respond. Because there was also a lot of emotion at that time during the meeting. So I also think we adjourned and I think there was generally some - some words of support but I think it was more along the lines of, "We should feel free to add things to the agenda."

10 **MR CONDE:** And did you regard that at the time as a satisfactory response?

MS IVANOFF: I think at the time - I mean, I was in my second full week. I thought perhaps that what happened after that time would - would be telling.

15 **MR CONDE:** Is it correct that at some point after that meeting, around mid-2023, you developed a feeling that you were not in the right place?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** I think I developed that feeling at the end of that second week. Mr Cooke asked me how I had found the off-site and how I was finding the organisation. And although it was very early, I do recall saying, "I'm not sure I'm in the right place or that I made the right decision". And then later - so, not too long after, so over the coming months during June, July, August, I was really considering whether I had joined the right organisation.

25 **MR BELL SC:** Ms Ivanoff, can I just take you back to the off-site meeting. Did I understand you correctly to say that you expected that there would be some protocols developed to address Ms Katsibouba's concerns?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** Mr Bell, it was an action coming out of that two-day session that a working group be formed, which I was part of, that would develop protocols, meeting cadence and bring back to the executive for review some recommendations which would also address the matters that Ms Katsibouba had raised just in terms of where the focal - focus areas of the GLT were.

35 **MR BELL SC:** Yes. Thank you. Yes, Mr Conde.

MR CONDE: In terms, Ms Ivanoff, of your feelings developed through June, July, August of not being in the right place, what caused you, as best you can recall, to develop that feeling?

40 **MS IVANOFF:** So I would say, Mr Conde, it was a mixture of various factors. First of all, I did not feel like I was being engaged to the fullest extent as the Chief Legal Officer of the organisation. So I did feel that I would be brought in and out of topics at whim by the CEO, which I found quite - quite awkward, to say the least. I also found that some of the frameworks and the accountabilities were very
45 unclear and whilst not - not a surprise, especially when you have a very newly-forming team and board, I found that there were areas that required clarity, especially around decision-making and accountabilities which should have really

been the next step out of the - you know, the review of meeting cadence, rhythms, agendas and similar. And I just felt that from a transparency perspective or, if you like, a visibility perspective, I wasn't really getting the fullest picture.

5 **MR CONDE:** I will take you to those in turn. In terms of - you mentioned in and out of topics at the whim of the CEO. If you are the Chief Legal Officer, though, how is it that legal issues can sort of be brought to you and not brought to you. May I just ask you to explain that?

10 **MS IVANOFF:** Sure. I think if you are handling the external legal firms, then those matters are naturally brought to you. But if you, however, are dealing with a CEO who negotiates legal agreements on their own and then just comes back to you with a version and skips maybe two or three versions in between, then, in my view, that's haphazard.

15 **MR CONDE:** I see. So when - for example - an example you can think of, there was a contract under negotiation. You were involved to a certain version. Then you were not involved. And you came back and things had moved on without your knowledge. Is that correct?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, that's correct.

MR CONDE: Can you think of any other examples or do you have any other examples where there is that feeling of not being engaged as the Chief Legal Officer?

25 **MS IVANOFF:** I think also if you recall my role also extended across the company secretariat function, and the governance deliverables under the remediation stream were obviously falling within my remit. So then discussions either across the Board of Directors, or the CEO with the manager or with the regulators, especially in terms of expectations around composition on committees or focus areas, not having visibility of those and then having to prepare the underlying governance documentation without that visibility does place you in a bit of a compromised position.

35 **MR CONDE:** I see. As Chief Legal Officer, were you also responsible for engaging external law firms?

40 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, I was.

MR CONDE: And for taking questions externally?

MS IVANOFF: Sorry, I didn't -

45 **MR CONDE:** If a legal question arose, for example, in the GLT or elsewhere, would it always be you who took any legal question to go externally to an outside firm?

MS IVANOFF: More - more often than not.

MR CONDE: Right. And if it didn't happen, in those circumstances where it was taken by someone else, who would be that person?

5

MS IVANOFF: I think it - the CEO and the Chief of Staff would go directly to external firms at times.

MR CONDE: And would that be - would you at least be given notice of that.

10

MS IVANOFF: Sometimes.

MR CONDE: Sometimes.

15 **MS IVANOFF:** Sometimes. More often than not by the external legal provider.

MR CONDE: Right. Do you have any comment on that?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** Well, it's probably not the way I'm used to operating, and I have been in very similar roles during my career. And it probably was a little bit different to what I had experienced. I also sometimes found it a bit - well, I was perplexed why, with a Chief Legal Officer, one would go directly to the external law firm as opposed to coming to me first. So I guess, at times, I felt a little either undermined or excluded.

25

MR CONDE: Yes. Are there any particular legal matters or projects that you can think of as examples of that?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** There were matters in relation to, I guess, generally in relation to disclosure on various issues, albeit if they related to our joint venture or if they related to agreements with New South Wales Treasury. There were also matters connected to a review that was being undertaken in terms of potential wage compliance and similar items.

35 **MR CONDE:** When you mentioned "disclosure", do you mean matters going to Star's continuous disclosure obligation?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, and lots of ASX releases for various matters.

40 **MR CONDE:** Right. You also mentioned the lack of clarity around frameworks and accountabilities. Can I ask you to elaborate on that, please?

45 **MS IVANOFF:** It was probably a few months into joining, I felt - and, obviously, the Legal team had raised with me some areas that required clarity around our delegations of authority. They were sitting hand in hand with delegations from the - that related to the manager since the appointment of the manager. We identified some improvements and areas of clarification there and they were

supported by the GLT and by the manager and approved by the board. So there was some traction early on.

5 In terms of some areas where there was less clarity, I think the actual GLT member accountability, who was being consulted, when, where the ultimate approval lay - so you would see, for example, matters where there could have been advice or engagement of other teams, but then something would be coming onto the GLT agenda for an approval without consultation. And so you would receive something or a pack and then have to be ready to go into a meeting to make a
10 decision on something which had not gone through what I would call good governance. And I think in terms of getting those accountabilities right, we probably had quite a lot of work to still do.

15 **MR CONDE:** Two questions out of that. First of all, who, to your recollection, was driving this haphazard nature of information being provided?

MS IVANOFF: Well, I think if you don't have a structure around how the GLT takes, considers and approves and your approach is, you know, the week before a GLT meeting, just send your agenda items to, you know, the EA of the CEO and
20 let's see how we go, we will allocate time, that doesn't really create a framework for considered, focused discussion. And so I think that creates a bit of haphazard.

MR CONDE: Would that also have the outcome that really the only people who know about it are those with carriage of the relevant project?
25

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: And did you regard this as satisfactory?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** No.

MR CONDE: I should have asked before. In your role as Chief Legal Officer, did you attend board meetings?

35 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, I did.

MR CONDE: And on that question of being engaged as the Chief Legal Officer, or not feeling engaged as the Chief Legal Officer, did that arise - I think you have spoken about the GLT context but did that also arise in the board context?
40

MS IVANOFF: I think in the beginning, I was very much included and was the one presenting the Litigation and Claims Report, for example. I also felt very comfortable to raise a comment or a concern or offer an opinion during a meeting of the board. I think that changed probably after the end of November, where I
45 was either less involved or excluded or matters that were within the CLO's remit were handled without me present.

MR CONDE: And does that correspond with something I will ask you about a bit later but in terms of your resignation?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, it does.

5

MR CONDE: Right. Did you feel, though - well, did you feel that you had visibility from a legal perspective on workstreams and things the company was doing?

10 **MS IVANOFF:** I felt that I had legal visibility over the matters that were under my instruction or care or control of my teams. So, you know, major pieces of litigation. If your question could be repeated just in terms of major projects, I think.

15 **MR CONDE:** Did you feel that you had visibility from a legal perspective on workstreams and things the company was doing?

MS IVANOFF: Most things. If I was aware or included, then yes.

20 **MR BELL SC:** Ms Ivanoff, you referred a little bit earlier to some of your concerns and you referred to visibility or transparency. Can I just make sure I understand what the nature of those concerns was?

25 **MS IVANOFF:** Sure. So, there would be, for example, if there were meetings that included external lawyers and the board or CEO, I may not be necessarily told about them or invited into those, or I might be brought in for a section of those and then excluded for another section of those. And so I think when you know that those meetings are taking place but then you are not included in those meetings, it can become a little hard for you to have full visibility over the nature and affairs of
30 the organisation.

MR BELL SC: Yes. Yes, Mr Conde.

35 **MR CONDE:** Ms Ivanoff, are you aware that the manager, Mr Weeks, prepared two reports in respect of Star dated 3 October 2023 and 24 November 2023 and that these were provided to Star on 29 November 2023?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I am.

40 **MR CONDE:** How did you become aware of that?

45 **MS IVANOFF:** During a board - it was either a workshop or a meeting - and I apologise, but the nature of that meeting changed a few times. At the end of November, when I was asked to join that session to co-present on a governance paper, which is a remediation deliverable - excuse me - I joined during a discussion where there was reference being made to the manager's reports and the letter from the NICC.

MR CONDE: And what was your reaction on learning of those?

5 **MS IVANOFF:** Well, I was just joining the meeting and so I didn't react, but during the meeting, I recall someone either directed a question to me, and I do recall that my response at the time was, "Well, I'm not sure. I haven't seen the correspondence." And during that meeting Robbie Cooke, the CEO, said, "Betty, we will get those to you after the meeting" and I said, "Sure." That was about it.

10 **MR CONDE:** Do you recall who asked the question that you just mentioned?

MS IVANOFF: I'm sorry Mr Conde, I don't.

MR CONDE: Have you ever seen those reports?

15 **MS IVANOFF:** No, I have not.

MR CONDE: Do you recall asking to see them?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: When was that?

25 **MS IVANOFF:** I think, actually, right after the meeting I sent a request through - well, actually, first of all I asked the Company Secretary for those, Hamish Macdonald. Hamish could not provide them to me. He asked me to obtain those from Robbie Cooke or his EA. So I emailed either Robbie's EA, Monique, and perhaps Robbie - I'm sorry, I can't recall. I don't have access to my emails any more. But I emailed both of them or one of them either just after that meeting and then followed up again, and I did not receive a response to that email or those
30 emails.

I then recall we had a GLT meeting. I think it was the Friday, which was the end of that week following those sessions. When we approached the end of the GLT meeting, there was a general matters section of the agenda, and I then made the
35 comment that I understood we had received correspondence from the NICC and updated reports from the manager. And, mind you, we had previously been provided as a GLT the reports from the manager because they were quite important for us to understand as an executive team.

40 So I asked that they be provided or that Robbie provide us with a summary of what had followed and, unfortunately, he did not receive my request too well and he advised that we would not be provided with any of those letters. They were addressed to the board and they were matters for the board alone to deal with.

45 **MR CONDE:** Did he give any other explanation?

MS IVANOFF: No.

MR CONDE: If I can show you a document. STA.8890.0001.0067. I would like to go please to page 0069. Just wait for it to come up. Okay. If you can enlarge the message up towards the top. And I would ask you, Ms Ivanoff, please don't read out any phone numbers. Do you see there is a message from Mr Cooke to
5 Mr Foster and the date of delivery recorded further below is 1 December 2023 at 5.09 pm.

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** Do you see it says:

"So Betty said in my GLT meeting just now that she caught up with Nick Weeks this morning and he mentioned there was new correspondence from the NICC.

15

I stated it is correspondence to the board and not something I have authority to discuss."

Do you see that?

20

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: Does that accord with your recollection or recollections of a discussion or discussions that you had around this time with both Mr Weeks and
25 Mr Cooke?

MS IVANOFF: So, to clarify, the second paragraph accords with what I recall happening. The first paragraph, I became aware of the correspondence from the NICC in the board session, not from the manager Nick Weeks.

30

MR CONDE: Right. Do you have any comment on not being provided with these reports?

MS IVANOFF: Well, I would have expected to be at some point. First of all, I
35 think the manager's reports, which are, you know, a reflection on how we are tracking or how we were tracking as an organisation, I think had been provided in the past so I'm surprised that there would be a reluctance now all of a sudden. In terms of the correspondence from the NICC, look, unless there was a particular reason or a matter that was to be kept highly confidential or a matter for the board,
40 I guess I have to trust the board's discretion on a matter like that. Generally, however, I would have expected to have seen that as the Chief Legal Officer.

MR CONDE: Aside from the reference you have already mentioned, were the reports discussed in your presence?

45

MS IVANOFF: Well, they were - as I entered the meeting, there was still discussion going on in relation to those.

MR CONDE: And I think you said earlier there was an assumption that you would be provided with them. Is that correct?

5 **MS IVANOFF:** Well, there was a statement made during the board meeting by the CEO, given I was - I had a question addressed to me, saying, "Betty, we will get those to you after the meeting."

10 **MR CONDE:** And do you recall the reports being discussed in your presence at any time after that meeting?

MS IVANOFF: I think there were general references to the reports in some of the subsequent board meetings but not too much after that, because I also was not invited to as many of the meetings after that.

15 **MR CONDE:** So as far as you're aware, those reports were handled by Mr Cooke and the board?

MS IVANOFF: I would assume so, yes.

20 **MR CONDE:** Is it correct that, so far as you are aware, nobody else on the GLT was provided with copies of the manager's reports?

MS IVANOFF: I'm not aware.

25 **MR CONDE:** I appreciate you can't know the content of those reports, having not seen them, but is it correct that you were doing work at the time relating to remediation, which, so far as you're aware, might have been assisted by having access to the views of the manager?

30 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: Is it correct that you were working on governance reforms?

35 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, I was.

MR CONDE: Yes. Now, is it correct that you resigned as Chief Legal Officer at Star Entertainment?

40 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, that's correct.

MR CONDE: When did you resign?

MS IVANOFF: I gave notice of my resignation on about 6 September last year.

45 **MR CONDE:** I will show you a document, INQ.5003.0002.0004. And this would be MFI6 - 8, sorry.

MR BELL SC: This is a new document, Mr Conde?

MR CONDE: One-page.

MR BELL SC: MFI8.

5

MR CONDE: Do you recognise this document, Ms Ivanoff?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

10

MR CONDE: What is it?

MS IVANOFF: It was my resignation letter.

15

MR CONDE: Do you see it is dated 6 September 2023, signed by you addressed to Mr Cooke?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

20

MR CONDE: Do you see it says in the typed text:

"Dear Robbie,

25

Further to our discussion, please accept notice of my resignation as Group Chief Legal Officer of the Star Entertainment Group Limited. As per my contractual notice period, I'm providing six months notice with my last day of employment being 6 March 2024. Thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to working with you on a smooth transition plan for the company."

30

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: Did you provide this letter to Mr Cooke?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

35

MR CONDE: Is it correct that you handed it to Mr Cooke during a meeting with him on 6 September?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

40

MR CONDE: Do you see handwriting on the bottom of the page?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

45

MR CONDE: Do you recognise that handwriting?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, it's mine.

MR CONDE: If you handed a copy to Mr Cooke, how does this have your handwriting on it?

5 **MS IVANOFF:** Because that's my copy and when I got home that evening, I made those notes and put that in my Star Entertainment employee file that I have at home.

MR CONDE: I see. Looking at the handwriting, does it say:

10 "Meeting with RC on 6 Sept tendered. Agreed to give it two months to consider if would retract. If no changes, RC would accept I resigned 6 Sept."

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

15 **MR CONDE:** And as a chronological matter, then, it's correct that the handwriting on the copy of this letter would not have been on the copy you handed to Mr Cooke. Is that correct?

20 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes, that's correct.

MR CONDE: If we can go, please, to STA.8000.0029.5429, and I would then like page 5433, please.

25 **MR BELL SC:** While that is coming up, Ms Ivanoff, should I understand what you have written in handwriting is a summary of a discussion you had with Mr Cooke on that day?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, Mr Bell.

30 **MR BELL SC:** Is there anything in addition to what is recorded in the handwriting that you recall from that meeting?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

35 **MR BELL SC:** Or does that fully set it out?

MS IVANOFF: I could expand on those. They were sort of just bullet points that I wrote.

40 **MR BELL SC:** Please expand and tell me as best you can the substance of what was said.

45 **MS IVANOFF:** So, when I informed Mr Cooke of my resignation, he asked that I take some time because he said, over, the course of the coming two months, he was making some changes to the organisation and he felt that they might change my view. He said that what we should do is check back in and if in two months he hadn't made those changes that would cause me to retract my resignation, that he

would accept that I had resigned on 6 September for the purpose of my notice, and he said that he would accept that that was the actual date.

MR BELL SC: Was that satisfactory to you?

5

MS IVANOFF: Look, I was open to it because I thought - I mean, I didn't really join the organisation to tender a resignation in four months. That's not what I wanted for myself professionally or for my team or for the organisation. So I had thought quite long and hard about whether I could continue in that role and what the issues were that were preventing me from feeling like I could continue to execute or actually fulfil that role.

10

So I thought if the CEO is telling me he is making some massive changes, obviously, the better outcome would be for me to stay and to, you know, see through the commitments that I had made to the organisation. And so I felt that what, effectively, I was doing was allowing myself or agreeing to be able to retract a resignation if things had changed in the two-month period.

15

MR BELL SC: Thank you, Mr Conde.

20

MR CONDE: And, Ms Ivanoff, do you see an email from you to Mr Cooke dated 6 September 2023 at 4.25 pm has come up.

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

25

MR CONDE: It says:

"Robbie, thanks for the chat this afternoon and agreed - let's see how the next two months ago. Here is the comparison report. See you for coffee."

30

Does that email accord with - sorry. Did you send that email consistently with the discussion that you have just mentioned to Mr Bell?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I did.

35

MR CONDE: So, consistently with what you have discussed with Mr Cooke, you had two months to consider whether to retract the resignation. That would take you to 6 November 2023. What, if anything, happened at that time?

40

MS IVANOFF: So, subsequent to that time, I think it was early November, Robbie and I were scheduled to have one of our fortnightly one-on-one meetings. That one-on-one meeting was cancelled because he had some other commitments. So what I subsequently did was send him an email with the matters I was hoping to discuss with him during our one-on-one and also to get some feedback on some various matters, because I either would have needed to update him or seek some instructions on.

45

So I just thought, "Well since we can't meet, we are not meeting for another two weeks or something, why don't I just email you what I wanted to discuss". One of those - and I think it was the last item I emailed - I included in that email something along the lines of, "Well, we're two months post our discussion. I would like to discuss next steps and arrangements for the team."

MR CONDE: And you mentioned before Mr Cooke saying that there were some changes he would undertake. What changes do you recall him mentioning?

MS IVANOFF: So he said that there would be some changes to the composition of the executive team, and also he committed to making some changes, such as starting to include me or copy me in on correspondence, having a catch-up coffee a little more regularly, hence the email that I sent saying, "See you for coffee soon." And also, I think maybe just for context, that comparison report, at the off-site, Robbie and I were used as an example where there was almost like a 360 review of our personality style, trades working styles.

And, for the purpose of the meeting, I think the example comparator was Robbie and I, how we would work together, where we would find areas of, I guess, overlap or friction. So I reminded him that we had that report and maybe we should work on that and have a look at that together, given where we were at in our working relationship.

MR CONDE: And is it correct that by mid-November and after, you were not satisfied that those changes had been made?

MS IVANOFF: I hadn't seen any of those changes and so I flagged with him that we needed to have that discussion. And then I think it was about the middle of November we had our next one-on-one, probably around the 15th, where I confirmed that I would not be retracting my resignation. I don't think Robbie was surprised by that at all, and he said okay. He said, "Well, tell me what that looks like."

And I said, "Well, we have agreed that notice would have started from September so I can stay until the first week - you know, the end of the first week of March. I've got some really good ideas on what we could do here on an interim basis." Because I had also previously disclosed to the Chief People Officer that I had tendered my resignation, to Paula Hammond. Paula had asked me to encourage Robbie to move quickly if we were to go outside, so if we were going to look externally, external in the market for a replacement.

So I said to Robbie, "I think we have got a really dynamic team, we have recruited well, we have got some really good people where, with some slight adjustments, we might be able to create an interim structure for the Legal and CoSec teams, company secretariat teams, and allow the time to run a process which - where we go to market but we could also invite internal candidates to apply. Is that something that you would like me to move forward with you on?"

And he said, "Look, I've had some visibility into your team. They are great but give me two weeks. I would like to have a coffee with a certain person so I can get to know that person a little bit better and maybe drill down into their background and career. Give me two weeks, and after that, we can go from there." He also - I think in that meeting said, "Look, if I needed you to stay a little bit longer, could you stay a little bit longer?"

And I said, "Look, sure, if it was to help with handover or transition or just to support one of our team members to sort of really step into the role, I would be happy to consider a flexible kind of arrangement but not a full-time one." And so we left it at that.

MR CONDE: Do you recall having an email exchange with Mr Cooke in December 2023 where there was a disagreement about whether you had resigned in September or not?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: If I can bring up STA.8100.0078.5823, please, and starting at page 5824.

MR CONDE: Ms Ivanoff, do you see at the bottom of this page, there is an email dated Monday, 4 December 2023, 1.39 pm.

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: From Mr Cooke to you, and it begins, "Hi Betty".

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: And if we can go over, please, to page 5825. Do you see this message says:

"Further to our conversations over the last few months where you indicated your unhappiness at The Star (including your views on your peers, the capability of the team and your working relationship with me) ..."

And then later it says:

".. I understand you have reached a decision to resign from your role.

This is disappointing as I had hoped over time these issues might have resolved for you.

If you have determined to resign, would you please be able to confirm this by return email.

In that event I am happy for your final date to be 5 March 2024."

And stop there. Do you see that?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

5

MR CONDE: If we can go back to page 5824. Do you see from towards the top of the page, there is an email from you to Mr Cooke dated 4 December 2023?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

10

MR CONDE: And the time given there is 1 pm. Would it be correct to understand that the time difference is likely explained by Sydney and Brisbane time?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, most likely.

15

MR CONDE: And do you see in your email you wrote:

20 "Confidential
 Hi Robbie,
 As we discussed in September and at our last 1:1 on 15 November 2023:"

First bullet point:

25 "I resigned 6 September 2023."

Next bullet point:

30 "You asked me to wait two months to see if the working environment would be any better because you were making changes, and nothing really changed from my end to make me feel comfortable to remain in this role. This is also disappointing for me as I really was hoping to make a difference to The Star."

The next bullet point:

35 "I confirmed again that the last time we caught up on 15 November 2023 that my last day would be 6 March 24, in keeping with my contractual 6 month notice period."

Next bullet point:

40 "I proposed some internal structuring for the team, and you asked me to give two weeks to have a coffee with Jen Dowler which I understand may be tomorrow by MS Teams. You asked if I could stay longer which I said we could consider on a flexible basis."

45

You then say:

"I would be pleased to discuss alternative arrangements to depart at a time that suits you better/sooner than 5 March 2024, noting I have provided you with the requisite contractual notice of my resignation. Happy to discuss these arrangements with Paula."

5

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: Now, if we can go back, please, to page 5823. Do you see at the bottom there is an email from Mr Cooke dated 4 December. The time given there is 2.11 pm. And he writes:

10

"Hi Betty,

15

Definitely not my recollection of our interactions and in no shape nor form did I consider our conversation on the 6 September 2023 to be a resignation.

20

I did agree that if ultimately you decided The Star was not for you, to agree an end date that was 'time stamped' to when you raised your unhappiness (ie 6 September 2023)."

Then:

25

"As you would be aware your contract (clause 9.1) requires you to provide written notice of resignation and I will assume from your email below that it constitutes such written notice."

Do you see that?

30

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: What was your reaction upon reading that at the time?

MS IVANOFF: I was quite shocked, actually.

35

MR CONDE: Why is that, Ms Ivanoff?

40

MS IVANOFF: I was shocked to receive the first email, let alone this email. Because I guess if someone - if you have a conversation with somebody and then they later email you back and say that that's not their recollection of your interaction with them, then I think that causes you some surprise.

45

MR CONDE: Did you read the email on this page saying "definitely not my recollection", "in no shape nor form" as a complete denial of what you had said in your email?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I did.

MR CONDE: And is it correct that you had to hand your copy of the 6 September 2023 letter and your handwritten notes on it?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I did.

5

MR CONDE: Then if we look to the top of this page, do you see your response dated 4 December 2023 at 3.15 pm, again marked "Confidential", and you wrote:

10 "Robbie I am sorry that we have come out of our conversations with very different perceptions, yet again.

I confirm my notice of resignation as below, effective 6 September 2023."

What were you referring to there, Ms Ivanoff, with the words "yet again"?

15

MS IVANOFF: I just - I think the "yet again" is really around the fact that Robbie and I would go and - or we would attend the same meeting and we would come out of that meeting with a different view on what the next steps were or perhaps sometimes what was discussed or agreed at that meeting.

20

MR CONDE: And are there any particular meetings that come to mind in that regard?

25

MS IVANOFF: Well, obviously, this one. But I think if I gave you another example, Robbie and I were both in a meeting with the manager's office, so some attendees from Nick Weeks' team and I think Nick was there, and we were discussing one of the remediation plan legacy issues. There's a bank and blank cheque review. We were updating the manager's office on the stages of that review and those deliverables.

30

One of the key takeaways from that meeting was that we would prepare the scope for the third stage of that review, that we would then submit that to the Queensland and the New South Wales regulators for review and, obviously, opinion, if they were satisfied with that scope. I then drafted and worked with our external law firm, who was assisting us at that time, to prepare that scope and that submission to the regulators.

35

When we did that, I think Robbie took some time to come back to me but came back and said, "Why are we doing this?" And I said, "Because that's what we agreed and we undertook to do in the meeting at the manager's office". Then there was a bit of, "No we didn't. Why are we doing it this way?" So then I asked for a meeting with him. I even called, I think, two of the attendees I think from the manager's office to double-check whether my recollection of that meeting is correct or not. They verified my recollection was correct so I passed that on to the CEO and then we got the letters out with the scope.

45

So it is just those sorts of things where you think we are in the same meeting, we should be on the same page. We are coming off these with very different views

and then it is taking me, you know, two or three weeks to get the next tranche out. So it is just difficult.

5 **MR CONDE:** If we can now call up STA.8000.0029.5429. And has a letter come up for you, Ms Ivanoff, dated 20 December 2023 from Mr Cooke to it the NICC?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

10 **MR CONDE:** And the subject is:

"Request for Further Information Regarding Resignation of Ms Betty Ivanoff"?

15 **MS IVANOFF:** Yes.

MR CONDE: If we can go, please, to page 5430 and - sorry, 5430. Yes. And I would just ask you, please, to read the entries for 6 September 2023, which go over the page. So first of all, if I can ask you to read, please, the rows 5 and 6.

20 **MS IVANOFF:** I'm ready to go to the next page if you need me to.

MR CONDE: Yes, if we can bring up, please, page 5431.

25 **MS IVANOFF:** Okay. So just rows 5 and 6, Mr Conde?

MR CONDE: And 7 as well, please.

MS IVANOFF: Done.

30 **MR CONDE:** And do you see in row 7, there is a reference to Exhibit A?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

35 **MR CONDE:** If we can go, please, to page 5433, that should be the email I took you to earlier. Do you see that?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

40 **MR CONDE:** If we can go back, please, to page 5431. Having read the entries for 6 September 2023, would you regard those as an accurate record of - I'm sorry, it's really the row 6, which, I'm sorry, is across both pages. Is it possible, please, to have the bottom of 5430 and the top of 5431 visible so that Ms Ivanoff can see all of row 6.

45 Ms Ivanoff, would you regard row 6 to be a correct record of your meeting with Mr Cooke that day?

MS IVANOFF: It's - it's not entirely my recollection but it's close.

MR CONDE: And would you agree that it's missing a rather important part?

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

5

MR CONDE: And what is that?

MS IVANOFF: I think it's missing the fact that I gave Robbie my resignation letter and it's also probably missing some other parts. I think that the description and some of the reasons I gave him are drafted to partially reflect what I said. Sorry.

10

MR CONDE: I think the operator has just enlarged that to make it more visible but it's the same text, yes.

15

MS IVANOFF: Yes. And, look, I think it also just probably shows that Robbie and I walked away with a different understanding of what had been agreed or what had been discussed during that meeting.

MR CONDE: Looking to row 8, do you see there is an entry for 15 November 2023?

20

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

MR CONDE: And do you see the second sentence:

25

"Ms Ivanoff did not resign at this meeting."

MS IVANOFF: 15 November, yes. Yes, I see that reference.

30

MR CONDE: Now, strictly speaking, would you regard that as true on the basis that you had resigned in September?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, but what I would say is that, on 15 November, I confirmed that I would not retract my resignation. I think that on 6 September, Robbie had asked me to take two months to see if things changed and then I could retract. So I felt like I had a period of time in which I could withdraw my resignation if things changed. On 15 November, I am very comfortable that what I made very clear to Mr Cooke was that I would not retract my resignation, which I had already provided to him.

35

40

MR CONDE: Is it correct that you disagree with these summaries? To the extent of your evidence today?

MS IVANOFF: Yes. Well, I agree with the first sentence in part 8. And then I think my evidence is different to what appears subsequent to that sentence.

45

MR CONDE: These matters were recorded in a communication, as you saw earlier, from Star to the NICC. If we can go, please, to INQ.5000.0004.0004. It should be a document dated 13 March 2024, and it's a response to this inquiry's Request for Information No.4, as recorded up the top of that document. Do you see that?
5

MS IVANOFF: I do.

MR CONDE: Can we go, please, to page 0006. Do you see Item 3, the inquiry asks?
10

"Did The Star or TSEG receive a letter of resignation from Ms Betty Ivanoff? If so, please provide a copy of any such letter and explain the circumstances in which it was received."
15

And do you see the response:

"No letter of resignation was received. Ms Ivanoff provided written notice of her resignation by email."
20

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I see that.

MR CONDE: And I can take you to that document they have referred to there. It's STA.8100.0078.5823. Do you see that's the email exchange I took you to earlier?
25

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I see that.

MR CONDE: Going back to INQ.5000.0004.0004 at page 0006. Do you see the last sentence or the last paragraph:
30

"Details of Ms Ivanoff's resignation were disclosed to the NICC in a letter dated 20 December 2023. A copy of that letter is at STA.8000.0029.5429."
35

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I see that.

MR CONDE: If we can go to STA.8000.0029.5429. Do you see that's the letter I took you to earlier?
40

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

MR CONDE: And then again if we can go back, please, to INQ.5000.0004.0004 at page 0006. Ms Ivanoff, do you have any comment on Star's response to this inquiry on this question relating to your resignation?
45

MS IVANOFF: Well, I don't agree with the company's response.

MR BELL SC: Ms Ivanoff, putting it as neutrally as one can, do you say that this response by The Star entities to this inquiry is incorrect?

MS IVANOFF: Yes, I do.

MR BELL SC: Yes, Mr Conde.

5

MS IVANOFF: Sorry, I should clarify. The first sentence of that response is incorrect, in my view. The second appears to be correct.

MR CONDE: The second -

10

MR BELL SC: Although you did, I think, say earlier that you didn't agree with some of the matters that were disclosed in that letter. Is that also fair?

MS IVANOFF: That's correct, in that annexure A that was shown to me.

15

MR BELL SC: Yes, thank you. Yes, Mr Conde.

MR CONDE: Ms Ivanoff, when you were at Crown Resorts, is it correct that you started a few months after The Honourable Patricia Bergin's inquiry and report into Crown Resorts?

20

MS IVANOFF: Yes, that's correct.

MR CONDE: And how would you compare your experience of the remediation and transformation process at Crown Resorts with the process that you observed at Star?

25

MS IVANOFF: Well, I mean, it's been some time since my time at Crown. I would say - and when I did join, I think Crown was still going through their review in Victoria and still to go through Western Australia. So they still were in the midst of finalising regulatory reviews and recommendations. Look, I think Crown's remediation activities were very well-resourced, and I also thought that the executive team brought with it an approach that was very professional.

30

I did not continue to see how the Crown remediation plan evolved, given I departed well before drafts were advanced and new owners stepped in. It would be very hard for me to comment much further, Mr Conde.

35

MR BELL SC: Ms Ivanoff, you would be aware of the context that the Victorian Royal Commission gave Crown Melbourne two years to return to suitability, a Special Manager was appointed on 1 January 2022, and I think you were there from - what was the period that were you at Crown?

40

MS IVANOFF: So, I started in May of 2021, I think, 22. There for about a year after that, year and a half.

45

MR BELL SC: Yes, so you were there until the second half of 2022.

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

5 **MR BELL SC:** So you would there for several months during which the remediation program was underway and the activities of Crown Melbourne were being reviewed by the Special Manager.

MS IVANOFF: Yes.

10 **MR BELL SC:** You were also obviously in the unique experience of also having experienced a remediation program at The Star. I'm interested to understand your views on a comparison of the culture between the two organisations in their approach to remediation and transformation.

15 **MS IVANOFF:** Well, I think commenting on my time at the Crown, at Crown, when - when I worked under the leadership of Steve McCann, I think that, at that time, there was a lot of focus on one-on-one time with the regulator. There was lots of information flowing back through to the executive team, and I think there was a lot of engagement and a dedicated office at that time.

20 I don't - I don't disagree that the Transformation Office was dedicated also at The Star. I think there was also lots of resourcing and focus from the TO at The Star. Maybe that came a little bit later in time than what I saw Crown sort of respond to. And I think, yeah, that's probably the most I could say in terms of the comparison to the remediation plan. And in terms - look, in terms of culture, I think the two
25 organisations are very different but I also joined them under very different leadership and at very different phases and stages of their journey.

MR BELL SC: And focusing on culture, can you describe the differences that you have referred to?

30

MS IVANOFF: I think that I found, during my time at Crown, that it was a very open culture, and I think that the dedication to uplift and transformation, but also the funds dedicated to resource the necessary functions were there. I think that there were definitely roles that were appointed with people that had had previous
35 experience in quite volatile environments or in changing environment, and so that helped with culture, because it brought a state of calm and good steersmanship.

I think that I also joined, as I said, at a very different stage at Crown than I did at Star. I think Crown's culture - The Star's culture in comparison is a little bit
40 different. I think The Star took this kind of, "We are not as bad as Crown and we never did anything as bad as Crown", and I think that kind of - you know, that kind of message sort of started to reign through almost as a defence point in the organisation.

45 And I think that over time - when I originally joined I felt that there was a real commitment, especially from the chairman and the CEO, to transparency with the regulator, to opening up and being very, very open with the manager and the regulators on many matters. And I think that was the mantra I was then flowing

back to the Legal team, especially when we were dealing with matters of privilege or matters of confidentiality. So I think the words and the talk were there when I definitely joined The Star. I just don't think that what I then subsequently experienced in the organisation matched the rhetoric.

5

MR BELL SC: So I just want to explore it a little bit further. You said that one of the differences was that the Crown's culture was very open and transparent with the regulator. What are the differences that you observed while you were at Star in that regard?

10

MS IVANOFF: Well, I think at Star - I mean, in my first couple of weeks, we were dealing, you know, very quickly with an issue of a matter that was either erroneously represented to the regulator or not disclosed in the right way or in the right timing. When that was escalated, I don't feel that it got the right amount of attention and focus, nor was it treated with the seriousness that I would have expected for something like that. Ultimately I think that was, you know, resolved. But I just was a little surprised at the pace and the reaction.

15

I then think that when I look at the way that my experience in terms of trying to bring some reform and improvements in areas of governance have been received, I would have expected a little bit better. And I also found that, during my time at Crown, the board members were very engaging, whereas when I've - you know, I've had my time at The Star, and I think even post me leaving and post raising some issues, I have not even been contacted by any of the directors to ask why I would resign after a four-month period. I find that, you know, a little bit different, if I compare cultures.

20

25

MR BELL SC: Yes, thank you Ms Ivanoff. Yes, Mr Conde.

30

MR CONDE: I don't have any more questions, Mr Bell.

MR BELL SC: I have got one more question, Ms Ivanoff. I want to ask you about the Group Leadership Team at The Star during the period whilst you were a member of it and I would like you to give me your impressions, please, about how efficiently the Group Leadership Team was functioning as a unit.

35

MS IVANOFF: It was not functioning efficiently.

40

MR BELL SC: And why was that?

MS IVANOFF: Well, I think if I sort of go back to the matters I was discussing earlier, things would just land on an agenda. Our meetings would get rail-roaded. We might have two hours assigned to discuss 10 items. We would get stuck on one. And I can appreciate that that can happen, especially if you have, you know, an issue that's sprung on the organisation so you need to course-correct.

45

But I don't feel that any of us would come out of those GLT meetings thinking, "Wow, we are really focused on the things we need to focus on", you know. There

would be - during the meetings there would be messages with people sort of put question marks and exclamation marks like, "Why are we stuck on this?" Or, "Why has this come in for approval at this stage?"

5 So, I think if you looked at it holistically, the structure or the foundation had not been set. We didn't establish the rhythms. There were obviously recommendations for improvement. They were not accepted or brought to life. And so things were sort of flying in left, right and centre and I think then the way that we were
10 focused on matters that you would expect an ASX-listed executive team to be focused on, on a very regular basis, that kind of cadence was missing.

MR BELL SC: Yes. Mr Ahmed, do you have any questions for Ms Ivanoff?

MR AHMED SC: No, thank you.
15

MR BELL SC: Dr Renwick, do you seek leave to ask any questions of Ms Ivanoff?

DR RENWICK: No, thank you.
20

MR BELL SC: Mr Harris, do you have any questions in reply?

MR HARRIS: No, thanks Mr Bell.

25 **MR BELL SC:** Ms Ivanoff, thank you very much for your attendance and for your evidence. The formal order I make is that the examination will be adjourned, but you won't be required to return unless you receive some notification from the solicitor assisting the inquiry. Thank you very much.

30 **MS IVANOFF:** Thank you, Mr Bell.

<THE WITNESS WAS RELEASED

35 **MR BELL SC:** Mr Conde, I believe the next witness is going to be dealt with in private session. Is that correct?

MR CONDE: Yes, Mr Bell.

40 **MR BELL SC:** I will adjourn for a moment and we will return in private hearing mode.

<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION ADJOURNED AT 3.16 PM

45 **<THE HEARING IN PUBLIC SESSION RESUMED 5.03 PM**

MR BELL SC: Yes, Mr Conde. Who is the next witness, please?

MR CONDE: Dr Attracta Lagan.

MR BELL SC: Yes, we will call Dr Lagan at 10 am tomorrow. I will now adjourn for the day.

5 <**THE HEARING ADJOURNED AT 5.03 PM.**