



**Friday 17 April 2020**  
**AMA STATEMENT**

Health care workers across the state are working tirelessly to prepare, adapt and train as quickly and as professionally as possible to this highly stressful global pandemic that is unprecedented in our lifetime. Right now, the Tasmania Government and Health Services response and resources need to pivot and focus on the north-west to identify all cases including those that are asymptomatic, isolate, contain and crush the virus to save lives.

To enable all our health care workers to manage this crisis, no healthcare worker, regardless of the role they hold, within the community, prehospital and hospital setting should be exposed to COVID 19 without the appropriate PPE and systems in place to ensure our staff are not exposed and transmit the virus to patients, other healthcare workers, or their families.

What we need to understand is how this outbreak has happened, unpack any systemic factors that may have contributed to this, without any blame, so that we can ensure that we have the systems in place that have been reviewed and endorsed by infectious disease specialist medical practitioners.

We need to ensure that the Tasmanian Health Service have learned the lessons and put measures in place to ensure that this doesn't happen again. The healthcare workers and north-west population need to have the confidence that when the North-west Regional Hospital reopens, it has had a hard reset and is good to go.

Many healthcare workers have written to the Health Minister with their concerns about ensuring patient and HCE safety on the entire north-west coast both at the North West Regional Hospital and the Mersey Community Hospital. These issues need to be addressed, it is emphasised to the Health Minister and the Tasmanians, the doctors and all other healthcare workers want to work with the THS to ensure we provide the best care of our patients and ensuring healthcare workers safety.

What we need to see is clear leadership, communication and governance at all of Tasmania's Hospitals.

For all hospital presentations and admissions, there needs to be;

1. An evidence-based risk stratification undertaken on each patient.
2. Appropriate isolation and separation of patient groups within hospitals, based on risk stratifications.
3. The provision and correct wearing of PPE by all healthcare workers that is evidence-based and undergoes robust ongoing review,
  - a. All healthcare workers need to be trained, fit checked and ideally fit tested before wearing N95 or equivalent masks
  - b. Healthcare workers need to be involved in emergency training and where appropriate simulation to identify and resolve issues
  - c. All healthcare workers need to have confidence that the PPE that they are wearing is both fit for purpose and fits them to ensure that they are protected
  - d. If healthcare workers fail fit checks and fit tests for PPE, then the THS needs to source and provide the equivalent PPE for healthcare workers
  - e. Ensuring that processes are in place that healthcare workers correctly remove and dispose of PPE, and do not take any virus particles out of either potential or actual virus hot zones
4. There needs to be an ongoing review of the PPE measures in place, and evidence-based guidelines regarding PPE requirements to be reviewed. This may require adjustments based on the advice of any clinical incidents, Australian evidence and international evidence regarding coronavirus transmission to healthcare workers.

5. Healthcare workers need to be rostered to work shifts that are of duration that is safe and avoids unnecessary fatigue.
6. Healthcare workers may need to be offered alternative accommodation if they live with high-risk patients and or have had a workplace incident with potential exposure to coronavirus.

AMA Tasmania also calls on the Public Health Director to report back on the findings, preliminary or otherwise, of the Public Health investigation into the NWRH/NWPH COVID-19 breakout today.

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### **AMA Tasmania**

AMA Tasmania spokesperson – Dr Michael Lumsden-Steel