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AMA DECLARES CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) A NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the AMA Federal Council has declared the coronavirus outbreak a national public health emergency.

Dr Bartone said the AMA calls on all Australian governments to act urgently on all public health measures to prevent community transmission of Covid-19.

“The Covid-19 outbreak is a national public health emergency,” Dr Bartone said.

“We need to get ahead of the curve – and this must start with the immediate banning of mass gatherings and ensuring that frontline medical and health workers are provided with the best possible information and equipment to protect the health of Australians.

“The Government’s public health advertising campaign must provide consistent and clear messages to allow Australians to guard against transmission and to go about their daily lives,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA Federal Council, meeting in Canberra today, made the following declaration:

1. Representing Australia’s Doctors and their patients, the AMA acknowledges our public health authorities have been acting along lines of other Western Nations, but we are concerned Australia has not moved fast enough to contain community transmission by taking the type of significant community control measures like those that have stalled community transmission in Singapore and Hong Kong.
2. The AMA has for some time called for banning of large public gatherings. This is an overdue need to protect and ensure the health of the Australian community. Mass gathering bans should have been established earlier.
3. The AMA also today again called for all Doctors, be they GPs or Medical Specialists, to be able to use telehealth for any regular consultations with their patients, not just those patients needing testing or care for COVID-19.

Today’s meeting of the AMA Federal Council is the last formal large group gathering of the Federal AMA until further notice.

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