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AMA CALLS FOR URGENT SENATE COVID-19 HEARINGS ON IMPACT OF VICTORIAN OUTBREAK ON HEALTHCARE WORKERS

The AMA has called for the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 to urgently conduct further hearings to consider the Victorian outbreak and the impacts on healthcare workers.

AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said that at the time of the AMA’s initial submission to the inquiry in May, and appearances before the Committee in June, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be under control.

“Since then, a significant outbreak has occurred in Victoria. At least 11 per cent of current active cases in Victoria are healthcare workers,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The rate of healthcare worker infections in Victoria is simply not acceptable. This week, we have seen more healthcare worker infections in NSW.

“We need to know what the rates of infection are, and what is driving this. Yet governments are reluctant to share that information.

“We have had months to prepare for the second wave of COVID-19, but doctors and other frontline workers are being let down by the failure to develop a set of strong national guidelines for PPE that puts the safety of healthcare workers first.

“Every day, our members tell us that hospitals are taking widely different approaches to the use of PPE. This is clearly one of the reasons why they are struggling to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among frontline workers.

“Doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers should be confident that they will be safe at work, and confident that they won’t bring COVID-19 home to their family and friends.

“The current situation is causing them enormous distress, and seriously affecting the capacity of our health system to continue to deliver care for our patients.

“The Commonwealth Government, and all State and Territory Governments, must commit and contribute to a target of zero healthcare worker deaths.”

Dr Khorshid has written to Committee Chair, Senator Katy Gallagher, to formally request urgent further hearings.

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