

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**Transcript:** AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, Channel 7, *Sunrise with David Koch and Samantha Armytage*, Wednesday, 15 July 2020

**Subject:** Impact of COVID-19 on hospitals

**SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:** There are fears Victoria’s hospitals won’t be able to cope with the increasing number of COVID-19 patients. The State recorded another 270 infections yesterday, bringing the total number of active cases to 1803. Eighty-five people are receiving treatment in hospital, 26 of them are in intensive care, 21 of those are on ventilators. Now, the concern is that fewer than 700 ICU beds are ready. The Government insists the remaining 4300 beds will be available soon.

For more, we are joined by the President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Tony Bartone.

Tony, good morning to you. What's going on in Victoria? Is it a case of hospitals not having enough beds or workers? Where are all the ICU beds that Daniel Andrews promised?

**TONY BARTONE:** Good morning, Sam. Look, this number of 4000 ICU beds is an extraordinary number of ICU beds, if we ever needed to get to that. We were always planning for spikes, and indeed, the spikes have been managed as we go along. But to look at it in reverse, by the time we get to 4000 ICU beds, we've got tens of thousands of people in hospital and certainly, an even a much more extraordinary number of cases being reported. So, we're well off any need for that quantum, we're coping with the demand at the moment.

What we are finding is that hospital doctors and nurses are under the pump, in terms of being able to man rosters because of infections or, indeed, having to isolate because of contacts with people who’ve become infected. But in terms of equipment and in terms of number of beds, we're coping and indeed, the plans are there to ramp it up. And that's where all the Chief Medical Officers of all the States and Territories and AHPPC have been working together, from the beginning, in terms of planning for an eventuality of the proportions we're seeing now.

**SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:** So, let's just go back into what you just said there. So, are we having issues with rostering in hospitals? Doctors and nurses who are coming into contact with infected patients, is that going to be a strain on the system.

**TONY BARTONE:** What we're seeing in some hospitals, at the moment, they're at a point of capacity, in terms of dealing with the rostering. And that's where we're needing to actually boost or surge that workforce capacity, at the moment, to fill the gaps for people who, because of infection or needing to be in isolation, are not available for shifts. And that's where the planning and the strategic workforce planning really underpins the response, at this stage, as we continue to ramp up all the other resources required.

**SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:** Okay. Dr Tony Bartone, thank you for your time today.

15 July 2020

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