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**AMA CALLS ON NATIONAL CABINET TO ACT URGENTLY ON COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19**

The AMA is calling for the Prime Minister to convene National Cabinet urgently to adopt a nation-wide position on masks and the strengthening of domestic border controls to curb the spread of COVID-19.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that mask use in areas of community transmission was now essential, following on from the strong evidence around mask use that has been emerging.

“It is now clear that masks reduce virus spread when worn in areas where there is community transmission,” Dr Bartone said.

“Masks add another layer of protection to the other significant measures of physical distancing, hand hygiene, and cough etiquette.

“The Victorian and NSW Governments are to be commended for encouraging mask use, but a consistent National Cabinet-backed approach is now needed should outbreaks occur elsewhere.

“Every Australian in current areas of community transmission must make mask use part of their daily routines.”

Dr Bartone said that there is also strong evidence that international and domestic border closures had been successful in slowing the early spread of COVID-19.

“The National Cabinet should now strengthen controls at all domestic borders,” Dr Bartone said.

“Border closure works. If existing border closures were relaxed, it would create a risk of the virus returning.

“We may need to accept that continued border closures will be needed for months ahead. The international border must remain closed, and State and Territory borders also need to be managed.

“There are also very practical issues to resolve for border communities. The Albury-Wodonga and Coolangatta-Tweed Heads communities should not be disadvantaged.”

The AMA wants the National Cabinet to commit to:

- Releasing community transmission modelling to inform the community about virus spread patterns.
- Developing a national network of contact tracing to allow targeting of resources to areas of high need during community transmission outbreaks.
- Zero health worker deaths.

Dr Bartone warns that there are clear signs of community complacency.

“Physical distancing is not always being followed in many areas,” Dr Bartone said.

“The uptake of mask use will need community education and nationwide product supply, and misinformation must be challenged and corrected.

“All Australians benefited from the quick and decisive action from the National Cabinet during the early COVID-19 phase when nationally consistent community messages were issued.

“It is time for the National Cabinet to reassert its leadership with strong and decisive policies and messaging on mask use, border management, mobilising national contact tracing resources, and commitment to zero health worker deaths,” Dr Bartone said.

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