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**TOO LITTLE TOO LATE – HOW MANY MORE HEALTHCARE
 WORKER INFECTIONS WILL IT TAKE?**

The AMA today demanded revised guidelines on personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers, following revelations that more than 2,500 Victorian healthcare workers have contracted COVID-19.

“The proposals announced today by the Victorian Government are too little, too late,” AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said.

“More than two-thirds of the second wave infections of healthcare workers in Victoria have been confirmed to have happened in the workplace.

“The Victorian Government has announced a ‘trial’ of fit testing of N95 masks. This trial is unnecessary – fit testing is a requirement for all people who wear N95s, whether they work in hospitals, aged care homes, or disability services.

“The Victorian Government is still not taking this issue seriously, despite more than 2,500 infections. Will it take the deaths of healthcare workers to convince them?

“There is still a chance for the rest of the country to once again learn from the Victorian mistakes.

“More than 3000 healthcare workers around the world are known to have died as a result of COVID-19.

“Australia had the chance to act, but is now playing catch-up in its efforts to protect frontline staff.

“Doctors, nurses, aged care workers, and disability care staff have been the most exposed.

“Every worker, no matter their profession, has a legal right to safety in the workplace. Current infection control measures are clearly not working and need urgent strengthening.”

Dr Khorshid said he had asked the Federal Government to revise current healthcare worker guidelines that do not require P2 or N95 respirator masks for use with all COVID-19 patients.

“Two weeks ago, the AMA asked the Infection Control Expert Group to rethink guidance that currently does not mandate respirator mask use for positive or likely COVID-19 patients,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Fit testing of respirator masks for carers and clinicians, and regular training on ‘donning and doffing’ of personal protective equipment also needs expanding.

“No other workplace would accept workers being exposed to illness at the rates we are seeing carers, nurses, and doctors falling ill in Victoria.

“Work Health Safety plans for all aged care, disability care, and hospital services need urgent revision to ensure they are providing infection control for protection of staff.

“Employers have responsibility for assuring work health safety. Aged care, disability care, and hospital employers need to assure their workplace protections can stand up to COVID-19,” Dr Khorshid said.

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