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ELECTIVE SURGERY PAUSE WELCOMED

The AMA has welcomed the Victorian State Government’s decision to suspend elective surgery to address the COVID-19 surge in hospital admissions.

Federal AMA President and Melbourne GP Dr Tony Bartone said the Victorian hospital workforce is already stretched, and will be further tested by the State’s COVID-19 aged care crisis.

“With 245 COVID-19 patients in hospital yesterday, and 44 in intensive care, we expect admissions to grow in coming weeks,” Dr Bartone said.

“The need to move COVID-19 residents from aged care homes into hospital will put an additional burden on doctors, nurses, and hospital support staff.

“An elective surgery pause should be for the shortest time possible. Deferring surgery denies patients treatment they need. Deferring too long risks increasing a patient’s pain or illness.

“GPs have a key role to play in caring for patients should elective surgery be paused. GPs can monitor and help manage a patient’s condition while waiting for surgery. This GP role is key.”

Dr Bartone said the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments should address the impacts an elective surgery pause would have on patients and health care staff alike.

“In pausing elective surgery, the Victorian Government should communicate with every affected patient about what the pause means for them,” Dr Bartone said.

“Doctors, nurses, and hospital support staff who may be redeployed to COVID-19 care or medical specialists who find their work is put on hold also need support.

“JobKeeper in specialist medical practices is essential but, additional financial support for affected specialist medical practices is needed.

“A commitment to safety of healthcare staff is also mandatory. The AMA has called on all governments to commit to zero healthcare worker deaths. I make that call once again.

“Any elective surgery pause should also be kept as short as possible. When surgery can be resumed, the private sector should be used in an elective surgery blitz.

“With Victoria’s COVID-19 hospital admissions growing, it is time to ready for the State’s hospital system and its doctors, nurses, and support staff for the likely surge,” Dr Bartone said.

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