

11 August 2020



Senator Katy Gallagher
Chair
Select Committee on COVID-19
The Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: covid.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator

Zero healthcare workplace infections

The AMA made a submission to your Committee in May, and subsequently appeared before your Inquiry on 25 June. At the time, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be under control.

Since then, a significant outbreak has occurred in Victoria. At least eleven percent of current active cases in Victoria are healthcare workers. The rate of infection among healthcare workers is higher than the general population. This has significant implications for the capacity of healthcare workers to provide care, in Victoria and elsewhere. It additionally raises concern for the wellbeing of members of the healthcare workforce and their families.

With ongoing potential for outbreaks to occur and grow in other States and Territories, the AMA considers it essential to further examine the Commonwealth's role in managing the current Victorian outbreak. There is specific need to consider if current Commonwealth responses to outbreaks in Victoria's aged care services are sufficient and suited to replication in other States and Territories should outbreaks occur elsewhere. There is additionally need to confirm adequacy of current national guidelines for personal protective equipment (PPE), together with effectiveness of rules governing access to the national PPE stockpile.

Given the serious nature of the current Victorian outbreak, and the justified concerns of front line health care workers, I'd be grateful if your Committee might urgently conduct further hearings, specifically in relation to the rate of healthcare worker infections and how the Commonwealth might commit and contribute to a target of zero healthcare workplace infections.

Yours sincerely

Dr Omar Khorshid
President