

9 August 2020

Prof. Brett Sutton  
Chief Health Officer  
Victorian Government  
Via email: [brett.sutton@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:brett.sutton@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

and

Prof. Andrew Wilson  
Chief Medical Officer  
Safer Care Victoria  
Via email: [andrew.wilson@safercare.vic.gov.au](mailto:andrew.wilson@safercare.vic.gov.au)

Dear Professors Sutton and Wilson,

**Comments from Victorian healthcare workers regarding personal protective equipment and occupational health and safety**

Last Sunday, 2 August 2020, 23 doctors from across Australia sent Federal Minister for Health, The Hon. Greg Hunt MP, a letter expressing no confidence in the Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG). Please find enclosed a copy of this letter.

We subsequently invited Australian healthcare workers (HCWs) to sign an open letter supporting our correspondence to Minister Hunt. This open letter has garnered over 3,000 signatures thus far. In our letters, we have called for:

1. The immediate introduction of the P2/N95 respirator for any care of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, in line with the precautionary principle, with fit testing of all HCWs who may be required to wear a respirator. This is an expansion of the revised personal protective equipment (PPE) policy recently introduced in Victoria in response to rising HCW infections and increased community spread of SARS-CoV-2;
2. Reform of the ICEG to include aerosol scientists, workplace health and safety experts, and representatives of HCWs; and
3. Transparent reporting of HCW infections adjudicated by an independent panel separate to health services or agencies, to avoid conflicts of interest.

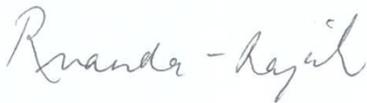
We believe that national policy on respiratory protection has not adapted to evidence for airborne transmission of COVID-19. Flawed policy based only on contact or droplet modes of transmission has put HCWs at risk and added needlessly to their psychological distress.

There has been negligible, if any, consultation with frontline HCWs about our own safety. Serious concerns raised by HCWs have repeatedly been dismissed or ignored.

Also enclosed is a spreadsheet containing almost 200 free text responses from Victorian HCWs to an optional question in our open letter about PPE and occupational safety. As you will read, the emerging themes are about access to PPE; concerns over occupational health and safety and policy; fit testing and training; fear and bullying; and the lack of application of the precautionary principle. We hope that these will assist you in your deliberations, understanding that speed is critical to avert further HCW harm.

If we can be of further assistance, we would be pleased to discuss how else we might contribute our skills to the government's efforts to keep HCWs safe at work.

Yours sincerely,



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