



Australian Government
Department of Health

Ref No: MC21-003462

Dr David Berger
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Dear Dr Berger

Thank you for your correspondence on 4 February 2021 to the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, calling for upgrades to respiratory protection for healthcare workers and for improved ventilation in healthcare settings. The Minister has asked me to reply.

This is a challenging time for Australians, especially for those working in healthcare, and I appreciate you raising your concerns with us. The Government continues to take a strong and decisive approach in responding to COVID-19, informed by the latest medical advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), supported by a number of expert advisory committees including the jurisdictionally based Public Health Laboratory Network, the Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG) and the Communicable Diseases Network Australia. The relatively low number of COVID-19 cases in Australia is the result of the swift and successful implementation of public health measures.

I note your concerns about aerosol transmission, as expressed by you and your co-signatories in the letter we received. I understand you have also tweeted frequently about this issue from what appears to be your Twitter account (@YouAreLobbyLud), using the hashtag #CovidIsAirborne.

Based on the expert medical advice received, the Government understands there is little clinical or epidemiological evidence of regular airborne transmission of SARS-COV-2. This is in contrast with SARS-COV, which caused SARS in 2003. Experts agree there is a gradient, from large droplets to aerosols. In experimental conditions, and possibly in poorly ventilated indoor crowded environments, there is some potential for transmission of SARS-COV-2 by aerosols. Ensuring indoor rooms are well-ventilated and using outdoor space, where possible, can help prevent transmission. Overwhelmingly, evidence suggests the main mode of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 is short-range, through droplets and close contact.

The ICEG's advice to the Government is that PPE requirements must be considered in the context of local transmission dynamics. In areas with significant community transmission, and in specified inpatient settings, health- and residential-care workers may need to take extra precautions, in some circumstances, due to the degree of risk. The ICEG's advice is available on the Department of Health [website](#).

As you would be aware, states and territories are responsible for procuring medical equipment and technology for infection-control purposes. Each jurisdiction has its own legislation and funding, which is supplemented by the Australian Government as a shared responsibility. Therefore, you may wish to consider contacting state/territory health departments on this matter.

Thank you writing on this matter and bringing your concerns to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Radha KHANI". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end of the name.

Radha Khiani
Director
Office of Health Protection and Response
09 March 2021