



Anaesthetists support NZ Prime Minister's call for level 4 COVID-19 alert

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The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) has welcomed the raising of the New Zealand COVID-19 alert to Level 3 immediately, and to Level 4 by Wednesday.

The college's president-elect, Dr Vanessa Beavis, says ANZCA appreciates the speed and decisiveness with which the New Zealand Government developed the four alert levels, and moved quickly to the highest level of alert.

She says this gives the best chance of holding the number of seriously ill patients at a volume that intensive care facilities can cope with. She says that, once community dissemination of the disease starts, it can only be slowed by the most aggressive measures.

Dr Beavis is also the Director of Perioperative Services for the Auckland District Health Board.

Because of the respiratory impact of COVID-19, anaesthetists, along with intensive care specialists, will be right in the front line of the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Dr Beavis says that anaesthetists have been preparing their departments on the ground, with a focus on the need for adequate personal protective equipment and the rigorous training needed to keep them from becoming infected themselves.

"While the raising of the alert to Level 4 will have a large social and economic impact, and will need astute political management, in ANZCA's judgement the benefit in saved lives and mitigation of the effects of the disease, both short and long term, will greatly outweigh the social and economic costs," Dr Beavis says.

"It is much better to respond aggressively, and to be able later to throttle back the response, than to under-manage the pandemic and be overrun by the consequences," Dr Beavis says.