



ANZCA
FPM

President
Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

12 August 2020

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

Via email: Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au

Dear Minister

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) is one of the largest specialist medical colleges in Australia and New Zealand, responsible for training, assessing, and setting standards for all specialist anaesthetists and specialist pain medicine physicians wishing to practice in Australia and New Zealand.

ANZCA is alarmed by the increasing numbers of healthcare workers (HCW) becoming infected with COVID-19, particularly in Victoria. Clinicians, nurses and other HCW are facing risks daily to help the sick and vulnerable in our community. They should be fully protected by appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times.

ANZCA is concerned with reports appearing daily regarding:

1 The adequacy and timeliness of supply of the right PPE in the right places. The college notes media reporting and surveys of doctors and others which suggest that no or inadequate PPE is supplied in some cases due to delays in delivery and shortages of stock. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

2 The type and quality of PPE is inadequate. The college is aware of reports that in some cases the appropriate standard of PPE is not always available, particularly N95/P2 masks. ANZCA recognises the importance of COVID-19 prevalence-based risk assessments in using PPE.

3 “Fit-testing” of masks is not routinely available in high-risk environments. In the most serious and high-risk areas it is important that HCWs should be fit-tested to ensure a safe seal and better protection for individuals.

ANZCA respects that Commonwealth and state health departments have the responsibility to set standards for PPE, particularly for public health services. However, there is growing concern that the quality and quantity of available PPE is not meeting those standards or community expectations.

The college notes that it is the responsibility of every employer – whether government, public or private health services – to provide a safe work environment. Simply complying with standards is no guarantee that this obligation is met. Employers have a legal and moral obligation to protect their HCW in these high risk situations, whatever it takes.

The PPE standards developed by health authorities inevitably lag behind evolving evidence and experience on the ground. The growing numbers of infected HCW suggest that the current standards may not be sufficient in all of the current circumstances. The position on the ground in this pandemic is changing rapidly as new risks arise and better evidence is available.

The college issued its own

[ANZCA statement on personal protection equipment during the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic](#) at the height of the pandemic which includes reference to the need for fit-testing of N95/P2 respirators/masks

under the Aust/NZ Standard (AS/NZS 1715:2009) and Australian Government infection prevention and control guidelines that are dependent on local COVID-19 risk assessments.

The college therefore urges government and hospital leaders to maximise workplace safety for healthcare workers.

Finally, ANZCA is available for specialist advice to government, particularly in regards to the treatment and management of COVID-19 should this be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Beavis', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Dr Vanessa Beavis
President, ANZCA