



**The Hon Greg Hunt MP**  
Minister for Health

**Dr Omar Khorshid**  
President, Australian Medical Association

## **JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

9 September 2020

### **ADDITIONAL COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO PROTECT HEALTHCARE WORKERS FROM COVID-19**

The Australian Government is implementing three new measures to help provide increased protection to help reduce the number of healthcare workers being infected with COVID-19.

Today, three new measures will be introduced to help all states and territories learn from what has occurred in Victoria and new information from around the world.

Firstly, a new partnership has been established between the Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG) and the National COVID-19 Evidence Taskforce led by the Living Guidelines Consortium.

With so much evidence emerging so quickly, this partnership will bring together Australia's leading infection control practitioners, many of whom are frontline clinicians, with other senior healthcare workers, to review the latest evidence on infection prevention and control during COVID-19.

The partnership will contribute to national infection control guidance by providing consensus guidelines on specific infection control issues that have emerged during COVID-19.

Secondly, the AHPPC has endorsed an expansion of national surveillance of healthcare worker infection to ensure we have a better understanding of COVID-19 among healthcare workers at the state and territory level.

This will provide more information on the type of healthcare workers who are becoming infected and enable state and territory governments to target their investigations and interventions based on national-level data.

Thirdly, the Australian Government has funded a new network of epidemiologists – or “disease detectives”. These ‘COVID-NET’ epidemiologists will be available on request by state and territory public health units to assist investigating healthcare worker outbreaks. They will also gather and analyse data on healthcare worker infection at a national level.

We are committed to assisting the states and territories to understand where workplace controls designed to protect healthcare workers have can further strengthened. It is important

healthcare facilities to continue to review their controls and strengthen these to ensure workers are better protected.

The Australian Government continues to support hospitals in their efforts to protect their workers from COVID-19.

This includes the provision of vital personal protective equipment, drawn from the National Medical Stockpile.

Since March, over 73 million masks have been dispatched from the National Medical Stockpile to support healthcare workers, aged care workers, States and Territories and to support the disability sector.

Our healthcare workers are doing an outstanding job of bravely caring for the health and wellbeing of Australians who have either contracted – or are suspected to have contracted – COVID-19.

They are at the frontline of our fight against COVID-19 and deserve the greatest possible protection from contracting the virus themselves.

The Australian Government is committed to assisting state and territory governments to ensure healthcare workers receive the protection they deserve.

**-ENDS-**