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The Australian Society of Anaesthetists Calls for Improved Hospital Safety

Dr Suzi Nou, President of The Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) has called for an urgent investigation to determine how an Anaesthetist contracted COVID-19 while attending patients at Liverpool and Campbelltown Hospitals.

“Anaesthetists are at the frontline of healthcare delivery, integral to all surgery. We need to be confident that hospitals are providing a safe work environment, including testing and screening patients for SARS-CoV-2 infection, the provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and good ventilation.

“In Australia we have been too slow to recognise the threats facing healthcare professionals. For over a year the ASA has been calling for recognition that COVID-19 is an airborne contagion and that frontline healthcare workers need far improved PPE”, Dr Nou said.

“We are pleased that the Commonwealth’s Infection Control Expert Group has finally recognised that COVID is transmitted via aerosols, recommending the provision of N95s masks and fit-testing to be provided to frontline healthcare workers.

“While the ASA supports these long overdue recommendations, the question remains what is happening at the frontline? Are these protections in place?

“PPE is a critical part of infection prevention and control but only one aspect of COVID protection”, Dr Nou said.

“Hospitals must employ experts to conduct risk assessments and introduce a hierarchy of controls, including improved ventilation to ensure workplace safety.

“Unfortunately, after a COVID incident in a hospital, hundreds of staff must be quarantined and this can cripple the health service; not to mention the impact of transmitting infection from health worker to patient.

“No surgery can proceed without Anaesthetists. News that a colleague has acquired COVID-19 in the course of their duty will shake the confidence of the profession. More must be done to ensure that health workers are protected”, Dr Nou said.

**Dr Suzi Nou is the President of the Australian Society of Anaesthetists.
To arrange an interview with Dr Nou please call Kathy Scott 0456 860 741**