

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Anaesthetists slam ICEG inaction as airborne COVID spreads**

The Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) has lost confidence in the Commonwealth's Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG) and its continuing failure to protect healthcare workers and the community from COVID-19 transmission.

ASA President Dr Suzi Nou has come out in support of the growing chorus of health organisations, medical personnel and other experts demanding immediate action as concerns grow around the Holiday Inn cluster in Victoria.

"It is not good enough for this alleged 'expert group' to continue to refuse to engage with the fact that COVID is airborne and to deny what we are all witnessing in the hotel quarantine crisis," said Dr Nou.

"In November the ASA raised our concerns about the lack of action by ICEG to address issues around improvements to personal protective equipment (PPE) and other safety measures.

"We spent months arguing for PPE including N95s and for fit-testing to be provided to frontline healthcare workers. Many are still waiting.

"We now fear those on the frontline of hotel quarantine are going to face the same challenges and we sincerely hope they aren't treated with the same gaslighting we were.

"Last year ICEG accused healthcare workers of being apathetic about infection control while also claiming there was 'hysteria' about aerosol transmission of COVID-19.

"As we all anxiously watch what is happening in hotel quarantine this week perhaps a level of hysteria might not be such a bad thing.

"It's time for ICEG to abandon outdated views about the transmission of COVID when the number of experts agreeing about aerosol transmission is increasing as rapidly as the virus," Dr Nou said.

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*The ASA, with more than 3,700 members, is the peak body and leading representative of anaesthetists in Australia. Since 1934 the ASA has been supporting, representing and educating anaesthetists to ensure the safest high-quality patient care.*