Call for Risk Assessments of Victorian Hospitals

The Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) and a coalition of medical, nursing and health and safety organisations have made an urgent appeal to the Victorian Government for comprehensive risk assessments of hospitals to protect healthcare workers and patients from COVID-19 across the state.

The ASA’s call for improved and consistent occupational health interventions in Victorian hospitals is supported by the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists (AIOH), AMA (VIC), Australian College of Peri Anaesthesia Nurses (Vic) & National, Council of Procedural Specialists (COPS), Australian Institute of Health & Safety (AIHS), Indoor Air Quality Association Australia (IAQAA) and the Rural Doctors Association Victoria (RDAV).

“We have written to the Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, calling for an immediate risk assessment of hospitals be conducted by health and safety specialists to protect the health of our members, healthcare workers and patients,” said ASA President Dr Suzi Nou.

“Addressing risk management in this area must also include the provision of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and greater consistency of practices around the use of respiratory protection.

“We are growing increasingly concerned by the lack of health and safety expertise being engaged by the healthcare industry and call for immediate involvement of experts to implement fit for purpose, risk-based control strategies to manage the hazards associated with caring for COVID-19 infection in healthcare settings.

“Surgical masks do not provide adequate protection against SARS-CoV-2 in a healthcare setting with only P2/N95 masks providing such protection and we call for P2/N95 masks to be mandated in high risk clinical areas when interacting with known or suspected COVID-19 cases and for these healthcare workers to be offered fit-testing,” 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.