

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **COVID Aerosol Risks Push Vaccine Priority for Anaesthetists**

The Australian Society of Anaesthetists (ASA) is calling on health authorities coordinating the prioritisation of COVID-19 vaccinations to not overlook the high-risk role of anaesthetists.

ASA President Dr Suzi Nou said growing acknowledgement of COVID-19 aerosol transmission underscores the need for anaesthetists to be identified as priority frontline healthcare workers with early access to vaccinations.

“We have sought clarification from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) on the sub-group prioritisation of the vaccine rollout strategy and it appears this is still being determined at national, state and local levels,” said Dr Nou.

“Anaesthetists work in locations with a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 and care for critically ill patients within and outside of operating theatres.

“We work in intensive care units, emergency departments and are frequently involved with the resuscitation of critically ill patients, particularly in rural and regional areas.

“Since the start of the pandemic, the ASA has been advocating for improved safety measures for anaesthetists and other healthcare workers for authorities to recognise that COVID is airborne.

“Anaesthetists are involved in some of the most high-risk aspects of care with aerosol generating procedures of airway management such as intubation for ventilation or for surgery.

“We look forward to the COVID-19 vaccination program commencing later this month and hope that anaesthetists are recognised for the role we play and be considered along with other healthcare workers who care for COVID-19 patients for early access to the vaccine,” 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.*