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**Transcript:** AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, The Today Show, 8 January 2020

**Subjects:** Bushfire smoke and asthma

**ALLISON LANGDON:** We're back now with an urgent health warning for asthma sufferers from that bushfire smoke.

**KARL STEFANOVIC:** Yeah, Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra again this morning waking up to toxic haze. Dr Tony Bartone from the Australian Medical Association joins us now.

Doctor, good morning to you. Thank you for your time today. [Audio skip] described it as a potentially fatal health risk. That bad?

**TONY BARTONE:** It certainly is, Karl. And the problem is that the length and the density of the smoke haze to which we're being exposed to at the moment are at unprecedented levels. It's been going on for longer, and it's particularly thick. Poor air quality in our capital cities at the moment. And it's particularly a problem for asthmatics, for those with pre-existing heart conditions, but also for those of us in the community that haven't yet been exposed or have got undiagnosed lung conditions that could trigger an event. So the message is that if you do experience chest tightness, difficulty breathing, not being able to finish a sentence without taking several breaths, you should seek medical attention very quickly.

**ALLISON LANGDON:** Well, I mean if you look at places like Canberra where the air quality there has been 22 times the hazardous ratings, it's not possible, though for people to stay indoors all the time. I mean, people have to get to work. They've got to go about their lives. What's your advice to them?

**TONY BARTONE:** Well, specifically the advice is if you don't need to go out, don't go out. But if you do, make sure you take precautions - minimise the steps that you take, the precautions to ensure that you're not exposing yourself unnecessarily. So that includes a face mask, but one of those P2 or N95 facemasks, not the old surgical mask or the paper mask. They're useless in this kind of situation and they need to be fitted properly.

**KARL STEFANOVIC:** [Talks over] Okay.

**TONY BARTONE:** Run your air conditioner on re-circulate mode to make sure you keep the external air out, and minimise physical activity during this time, during this exposure.

**KARL STEFANOVIC:** Okay. Really quickly, I know that asthma sufferers are a particular worry for you. I guess also asthma sufferers who are younger, anything under the age of 10 can be particularly bad in these circumstances.

**TONY BARTONE:** So kiddies under 10, 11, 12, absolutely. The elderly and pregnant mums absolutely need to take heed and follow the precautions that we're putting out today.

**ALLISON LANGDON:** Well doctor, thank you so much for your time this morning and for sharing those warnings with us.

8 January 2020

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