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TIME FOR EVEN MORE INCREASED SOCIAL ISOLATION

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that, in light of last night’s strong statements from the Prime Minister and ahead of another meeting of the National Cabinet tonight, the AMA encourages even more and stronger social isolation measures to protect the health of the Australian community.

Dr Bartone said the AMA will support decisions of governments to enforce further closure of non-essential services, suspension of schools and non-essential workplaces, and increased home isolation to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

“Governments have confused recent social isolation messaging to the public, and different positions taken by different governments have created public anxiety. We need strong consistent messages from all levels of government,” Dr Bartone said.

“International experience, the efforts of several States to limit travel, escalation in community transmission, and public flouting of existing measures means further home isolation is needed.

“Acknowledging debate about evidence of exactly where and when expanded social isolation should commence, the AMA offers strong support for new measures of governments to expand home isolation for students and workers not essential to defeating Covid-19.

“It is a big call for governments to direct the population to cease work, suspend schools, and only leave home for essential needs, but the AMA will back governments in making this call.

“New Zealand has adopted broad community isolation measures. The United Kingdom has instructed its population to stay home except to shop and seek medical help.

“It’s time for governments to act on their local evidence, while avoiding further confusion, to increase home isolation. More people need to be at home to flatten the escalation curve.

“Tragically, increased isolation measures will affect employment, livelihoods, and the mental health and wellbeing of many Australians.

“Governments have provided economic stimulus and direct unemployment support. More will likely be needed, and nationwide mental health must be prioritised,” Dr Bartone said.

In calling for further social isolation, Dr Bartone said extra support is needed for health and other essential service personnel.

“Essential workers must be supported in their role of ensuring life continues as normally as possible in these unusual circumstances,” Dr Bartone said.

“The health, safety, and childcare needs of all healthcare workers must be prioritised to maintain healthcare delivery capacity during the response to Covid-19.

“In particular, mounting pressure arising from insufficient access to and management of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be relieved.

“Governments have been doing their best to source additional supply, with more pledged by Health Minister Hunt today. Yet doctors, healthcare workers, and patients remain worried.

“National management plans for sustainable of use PPE are needed, together with assurances about how and when additional PPE will be distributed for use,” Dr Bartone said.

25 March 2020

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