

## **GPs demand better protection from virulent Delta strain**

General Practitioners across Queensland were facing a dangerous shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to shield practice staff and patients from the Delta variant of COVID-19.

During the pandemic, GPs have been supplied with PPE through the Federal Government's Primary Health Networks (PHN) but practice owner and Chair of AMA Queensland's Council of General Practice Dr Maria Boulton said doctors and clinic staff were not being supplied with enough N95/P2 masks to ensure their protection.

"We've been calling for adequate PPE supplies, including masks and gowns, for more than a year," Dr Boulton said.

"Relying on standard, disposable surgical masks puts clinic staff and patients at huge risk from this frighteningly contagious variant, as they do not protect against airborne spread."

N95 or P2 masks have been designed to achieve a very close facial fit and provide more effective protection from airborne particles.

Dr Boulton said GPs needed regular supplies of N95/P2 masks and a bigger range.

"We get a trickle of just one style of N95 masks through the PHNs but masks need to fit properly to work and when we face fit-test, in my experience, a mask won't fit properly half the time," she said.

"This highlights the need for a variety of masks to be made available and for federal and state health departments to facilitate face fit testing for GPs and their clinic staff."

Dr Boulton said masks should also be changed every four hours or if they become wet.

"That's at least two masks per shift per person," she said. "Now, multiply that by thousands of General Practice staff working across the state – that's how many we need right now."

AMA Queensland President Professor Chris Perry urged the state and federal governments to coordinate their PPE stockpiles before disaster struck.

"Doctors should not be expected to shop around for N95 masks at retail prices – they are serving the community and governments must provide the protection they deserve," Professor Perry said.

"GPs are the backbone of Australia's COVID vaccination program and continue to care for patients during the pandemic.

"It would be disastrous if they had to shut due to a lack of suitable PPE."

**MEDIA CONTACT: Barbara Cox, Sequel PR – 0403 090 913**