

### **More details needed on Wellcamp regional quarantine facility**

AMA Queensland has called for more clarity around how the Wellcamp regional quarantine centre will work and the level of local leadership that will be involved in its operation.

“While we support investment in purpose-built quarantine facilities, we must be guided by the local medical community on how these centres operate and how they will be supported medically,” AMA Queensland President Professor Chris Perry said.

“We must be able to safely manage overseas travellers and returning Australians to avoid COVID outbreaks and the dire economic and social impacts of lockdowns.

“However, we can’t afford to outsource our quarantine issues to regional areas without providing those areas with adequate resources. Toowoomba Hospital is a very good facility and could manage COVID cases with the proper resourcing, but it is already at capacity and would struggle to deal with a major outbreak.”

The proposal to airlift COVID-positive patients from Toowoomba to Brisbane is risky and resource-intensive.

“Aeromedical retrieval magnifies the risk of spreading COVID to the health care workforce,” Prof Perry said.

“Helicopters have to be decontaminated and jet travel involves an extra ambulance trip from the airport, creating more potential for infection.”

Chair of the federal AMA Council of Rural Doctors, Dr Marco Giuseppin, said there are concerns about where the workforce would come from, given the need to lock down at the facility.

“Regional areas already struggle at the best of times to attract suitably trained and experienced health workers,” Dr Giuseppin said.

“There is the potential to strip-mine the regional workforce by offering higher wages to doctors and nurses to work at the quarantine facility, luring them away from other vital regional work.

“We also need to know what contingency plans would be in place in the event of a COVID outbreak. How would local hospital capacity be shored up?

“Above all, local doctors should be at the centre of developing a quarantine program in a location like Toowoomba, as they have the expertise to address the needs of the community.

“AMA Queensland welcomes the investment in purpose-built quarantine facilities, but requires assurances that there is adequate workforce, leadership, and resourcing to support the region.”