

Doctors call for voting fast lanes for elderly at polling booths

Doctors are calling for 'fast track lanes' for elderly people at polling booths on Saturday and are urging people to take their own pens to lodge their ballots in the local government election.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia said it was disappointing the deadline for registering for postal voting had not been extended given the unprecedented circumstances.

"Given this weekend's elections are to go ahead despite the pandemic protocols outlined by the Prime Minister and the growing fear in the community, we are calling for special measures at polling booths," Dr Dhupelia said.

"It is critical that people who are sick do not attend polling booths. If you are unwell or in isolation, it's important to stay at home for the full duration of the 14-day quarantine period, even if you have tested negative for COVID-19.

"We are urging government to waive all fines for anyone not voting for legitimate reasons to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 and to ensure no further financial hardship occurs during these unprecedented times."

Dr Dhupelia said there should be no hand-shaking by candidates at polling booths and no handing out how-to-vote cards.

"We are also urging voters to avoid taking their children to polling booths where possible," he said.

"Consider taking turns with your partner or a friend in going to vote so one of you can stay home with the kids."

Dr Dhupelia said while it was important for people to exercise their democratic right to vote, it also was critical to adhere to social distancing rules.

"That means staying at least 1.5 metres away from other people and we are recommending that those who have face masks to wear them when they are at the polling stations," he said.

"We urge people to get in and out as fast as possible and, to assist the elderly with this, we are calling for separate fast track lanes to ensure they are at the polling booths for the least amount of time as possible.

"Everyone should be sure to sanitise their hands when leaving the polling booth as well as when they return home."

Dr Dhupelia said how-to-vote cards should be on posters on walls at polling booths rather than handed to people.

"We also expect volunteers to adhere to social distancing rules and to follow hand hygiene rules," he said.

"It's very important that there's plenty of sanitiser available for voters at entry and exit points and that polling booths at schools are thoroughly sanitised and disinfected before students and teachers return on Monday."

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