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MEDIA RELEASE

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Nurses', midwives' and personal care workers' union calls on Opposition and crossbenchers to back state of emergency law

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) is calling on the Opposition and crossbenchers to support the nursing, midwifery and personal care worker workforce by passing the extension of Victoria's state of emergency law.

Under the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act a state of emergency can only be in place for six months.

A state of emergency allows the Chief Health Officer to make wearing a mask and self-isolating, if you are COVID-19 positive or a close contact, mandatory. It also allows enforcing measures such as public gathering limits and requiring workplaces to have a COVID-safe plan.

Despite Victoria having time to prepare, nurses, midwives and aged care personal care workers have felt the full brunt of the COVID-19 outbreak while caring for the Victorian community.

Nurses and personal care workers, particularly those who work in residential aged care, have made up a large proportion of the more than 2600 healthcare workers who have contracted the virus.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said: 'The state of emergency law has provided the Chief Health Officer and the Victorian Government the ability to compel us all to follow measures that are bringing the spread of the virus under control and saving the lives of our healthcare workers and many more Victorians.

'2020 is the international year of the nurse and the midwife and instead of celebrating, they've worked harder than ever before under unprecedented conditions, while they worry about contracting the virus themselves or passing it onto a family member,' Ms Fitzpatrick said.

'It's been brutal, and they're exhausted with these last few weeks taking an enormous toll.

'Instead of calling them heroes and angels we want our politicians to let nurses, midwives and aged care personal care workers know that you have their back by passing a law to provide a framework for a COVID-safe normal once this outbreak is under control and to quickly respond if there are further outbreaks after this wave,' she said.

'This isn't about maintaining stage 4 restrictions and curfews; it's about having strong enforceable rules in the foreseeable future for living with a pandemic.

'Even when restrictions ease, we're all going to have to follow COVID-safe measures to avoid high rates of community transmission that will protect our healthcare workers so they will be there when you need them most.'

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