

Submission
No 22

INQUIRY INTO MANDATORY DISEASE TESTING BILL 2020

Organisation: Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (NSW) (ASMOF)

Date Received: 22 December 2020

ASMOF NSW Submission RE: Mandatory Disease Testing Bill 2020

The Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF) is the Doctors' Union, representing over 12,000 Registered Medical Practitioners including Staff Specialists, Post Graduate Fellows, Clinical Academics, Career Medical Officers and Doctors in Training including Interns, Resident Medical Officers and Registrars who are directly employed in the Public Hospital system, Affiliated Health Facilities, Private Hospitals and in Community Health.

The safety of workers on the frontline is of paramount concern to our Union, and we have previously advocated for health system reform to reduce the risk of violence experienced by our members, particularly those working in Emergency Departments. Aggression and violent incidents continue to rise and represent a serious health and safety risk to doctors, which is why we have advocated for the Ministry of Health to address system strain and provide safe working environments for medical staff. This is particularly important in the context of rising demand for mental health services, and a profound shortage of bed-based mental health care that is causing long waits for patients.

ASMOF NSW does not believe that this Bill addresses the safety of our workers on the frontline, and we strongly oppose the move to allow law enforcement officer to use reasonable force to assist in taking blood and preventing loss or contamination of a blood sample.

ASMOF is concerned about the breach of individuals autonomy to consent to medical procedures and the lack of oversight for testing in the proposed Bill. We are deeply concerned that the Bill does not require the medical advice of an infectious disease expert to be included in the application for a mandatory test.

There is no evidence that mandatory testing will be effective in reducing harm or risk to people involved in potential exposure incidents. We support harm minimisation and evidence-based health principles, and this Bill is *not* in line with best practice public health policy, nor does it address the current and pressing safety risks to our medical workforce.