



ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

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PEAK BODY CALLS FOR IPC EXPERTISE TO STRENGTHEN NEW CDC AFTER COVID-19 RESPONSE INQUIRY

Outcomes of the inquiry into Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic have been released, identifying key issues and guiding recommendations for a successful pandemic response, with further recommendations for phased functions of the proposed Centre for Disease Control – these outcomes have an impact on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and IPC professionals.

The President of the Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control (ACIPC), A/Prof Stéphane Bouchoucha, has highlighted that the inclusion of IPC expertise in the CDC structure is essential and that ACIPC is advocating for a dedicated IPC branch of the Centre.

"The review identified the need for the CDC to establish a public health surveillance system to operate at a national level, providing a comprehensive surveillance infrastructure that facilitates disease detection and monitoring," he said. "Once established it recommends this system be expanded to include chronic and communicable disease surveillance. Communicable diseases have a major impact on the lives of Australians and such surveillance is the foundation of the work IPC professionals undertake. Surveillance and reporting activities aim to reduce the burden of disease and improve outcomes for individual and the community. Having reliable data on the prevalence of disease and infection within Australia will strengthen prioritisation and allocation of resources and enable infection prevention and control (IPC) innovations to reduce infections.

"The inquiry has stated "Working with the Department of Health and Aged Care, states and territories and the advice of relevant professional bodies, the CDC would be responsible for the development of best-practice guidelines on infection prevention and control across a wide range of settings, including testing for and tracing of emerging diseases". While this recognises the lack of IPC resources at a national level, there are no planned systems or infrastructure within the CDC to include IPC expertise, with the CDC indicating that IPC will remain the remit of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

"Given the lack of IPC expertise and acknowledgement of IPC as a specialist field within the CDC, the College has significant concerns about outcomes recommended by the Inquiry will be achieved. IPC is an established discipline that influences and strengthens both health systems and community settings. It is vital that the CDC includes an IPC branch with key experts to provide a source of authority and leadership across the health and public sectors. Integrating IPC into the CDC is not only logical but imperative for safeguarding public health, optimising resources, fostering collaboration, demonstrating leadership in disease prevention and control and being fully prepared for the next pandemic," A/Prof Bouchoucha said.

For more information, image and interview requests, contact office@acipc.org.au.