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MEDIA RELEASE: Pope Francis declares support for COVID-19 vaccine patent waiver

17 May 2021

Caritas Australia is among numerous non-government organisations that have recently urged the Australia government to support the proposal for the COVID-19 patent to be suspended to boost supplies to lower-income countries.

The organisation echoes Pope Francis, who also recently backed the call for the COVID-19 vaccine patent to be relaxed for the duration of the pandemic.

In a video message as part of the online charity concert Vax Live last Saturday, Francis called for “universal access to the vaccine and the temporary suspension of intellectual property rights”.

Francis has lent his voice and influence to encourage pharmaceutical companies to relax the patents for COVID-19 vaccines, so that local drug companies can make copies of the vaccine without infringing intellectual property rights. This will enable lower-income countries to boost their own vaccine supplies internally.

The Pope’s support at the Vax Live event echoes his earlier statement in the Vatican’s COVID-19 Commission, that the world should “consider the vaccine as a good to which everyone should have access, without discrimination, according to the principle of the universal destination of goods”.

The proposal to waive the vaccine was also recently backed by the Biden administration in the United States.

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

Address: 24-32 O’Riordan St, Alexandria NSW 2015

Phone: 1800 024 413 **Fax:** +61 2 8306 3401

Email: questions@caritas.org.au **ABN:** 90 970 605 069

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www.caritas.org.au



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