



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **MANDATORY VACCINATION OF DISABILITY SUPPORT WORKERS ESSENTIAL, SAYS CATHOLIC SECTOR**

The peak advisory body for some of the largest providers of community care is calling on the Federal Government to mandate the vaccination of disability support workers against COVID-19 as the Delta variant continues to rip through communities.

Catholic Health Australia has written to the Prime Minister and the Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme Linda Reynolds urging them to trigger a Commonwealth mandate vaccination program much like the one for residential aged care workers.

With only about a third of disability support workers fully vaccinated, CHA members are asking for action as the Delta variant continues to spread through the community. CHA members say the 'opt in' model is not working and the only way to expedite the vaccination program is to make it mandatory.

The Commonwealth has already made it compulsory for residential aged care workers to get their first shot by the middle of this month and now states are requiring health workers to get vaccinated.

CHA Director of Mission and Strategy Rebecca Burdick Davies says: "If mandatory vaccination is good enough for residential aged care and health care workers then surely it must be good enough for disability support workers.

"We have a duty to protect the most vulnerable in our community and we can start by requiring our staff to be vaccinated. These workers are going into people's homes and moving around the community - it is part of their job description. Their place of work is the community and we have learned that the Delta variant spreads rapidly via mobile workforces."

Ms Burdick Davies said that as new supplies of COVID-19 vaccines come on stream there should be no excuses for not mandating vaccine disability support workers.

"Every day we delay is another day where people living with a disability and the people that care for them are exposed to unnecessary risk. Our members are already organising the vaccination of staff but for the minority who are hesitating for whatever reason, that hard push from government will draw a line in the sand."

Mark Phillips, CEO of CatholicCare Sydney, said: "As vaccination levels rise and we open up our communities, it will be increasingly difficult to protect vulnerable clients and our own staff in the way that we should if we have unvaccinated workers.



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“A government mandate for vaccinations for our workers will assist us to put in place the protections that our clients, our staff and the community expect.”

Jack de Groot, CEO of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, said: “Vinnies is committed to the care and well-being of some of our community’s most forgotten and hidden people. The lives of those Australians living with disability matter. Their well-being requires a workforce that is healthy, and which strives every day to make a real difference to those living with disability.

“Mandatory vaccination in our services should be part of the normal requirements to maintain the health and safety of our communities.”

CHA members include, among others, St Vincent de Paul NSW, St Vincent de Paul Queensland, Catholic Healthcare, CatholicCare, Ozcare, St John of God Healthcare, and St Vincent’s Health Australia.