



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021

# **CATHOLIC HEALTH AND AGED CARE SECTOR CALLS ON MINISTER HUNT TO KEEP COMMISSIONING AZ JABS FOR NEIGHBOURS DOING IT TOUGH**

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is calling on the Federal Government to commit to continue manufacturing the AstraZeneca vaccine in Australia to make it available to nations that desperately need it.

The Government has announced it does not intend to renew its contract with CSL beyond the 51 million doses the company had already promised to deliver.

However, CHA chief executive Pat Garcia has written to Health Minister Greg Hunt, urging him to ensure Australia continues producing the AZ vaccine and making it available to the World Health Organisation's COVAX initiative.

"Australia has an ethical obligation to assist poorer nations in the Pacific and beyond to get their populations fully vaccinated against COVID-19 now and into the future," Mr Garcia said.

"We need to consider what kind of neighbour we want to be. Australia is currently preparing to provide booster shots to its immunised population, while at the same time more than half the global population has yet to receive a single jab. In low-income countries, less than 3 per cent of people have received a single dose of any COVID-19 vaccination.

"We have the resources to help, and we should. CHA commends the government's efforts to date in assisting neighbouring nations to access vaccines, but we have the capacity to do more."

Mr Garcia pointed out the consideration was not just ethical but good practice when it comes to pandemic management.

"Australians are not safe until everyone is safe," Mr Garcia said. "As with other vaccine-preventable diseases, Australians will only be safe when COVID-19 is suppressed globally, particularly as we begin to open our borders."

Mr Garcia noted some states and territories are championing new initiatives to produce mRNA and other vaccines domestically.

"If the Government is truly determined to end its contract with CSL, it should ensure other



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arrangements are made to provide Australian-funded and produced vaccines to the world's poorest populations," Mr Garcia said.