

## Catholic Health Australia calls for equal access to healthcare

WRITTEN BY

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Catholic Health Australia says it's more vital than ever to heed the central message of World Day of the Sick and deliver "trust based care" during the pandemic.

With the vaccine roll out fast approaching, CHA CEO Pat Garcia says it's essential that care is delivered to the most marginalised and needy in society and that there is equal access to healthcare across the country. 'The pandemic has demonstrated that there are certain sections of the community that have been hardest hit.

'We must address this and ensure we take better care of the elderly, the vulnerable and people with complex health needs.'

The Catholic Church's World Day of the Sick is held on February 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It's seen as an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who provide them with assistance and care both in healthcare institutions and within families and communities.

Mr Garcia said: 'In Australia we have been very fortunate to be spared the very worst of what the pandemic has thrown at us. However, it has demonstrated there are great inequalities in healthcare around the world, and that even here in Australia there are some who have been harder hit.

'This year's World Day of the Sick should remind us all that we should place great value in caring for the frail and the needy.'

Mr Garcia said our leaders and the public should heed the words of Pope Francis who wrote: 'The COVID-19 pandemic has made it obvious to everyone that elderly, weak and vulnerable people are not always granted access to care,' at least not in an equitable way. This is the result of political decisions, resource management and a greater or lesser commitment on the part of those holding positions of responsibility.'

'Investing resources in the care and assistance of the sick is a priority linked to the fundamental principle that health is a primary common good,' Pope Francis wrote in his message, which was released by the Vatican.

Achieving "a trust-based relationship to guide care for the sick" should also be viewed as a goal all healthcare providers should aim for, especially in an era of growing anti-science sentiment.

Mr Garcia added: 'If we are ever to get on top of this pandemic we need all Australians to continue to place their trust in our safety measures and get fully behind the vaccine program.'