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MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Government must show leadership on rapid antigen tests

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society has called on the Federal Government to make rapid antigen tests freely available to all people living in Australia, but especially to social services and the people they assist.

National President, Claire Victory said access to supply and cost are major issues for the Society right now with vulnerable people at increased risk of contracting COVID.

'It is essential that the Federal Government ensures the timely supply of RATs to social services and to the vulnerable people they assist,' Ms Victory said.

'This is no time to be testing market forces.

'Ready access to free tests would help overcome the issue of price gouging and other anomalies emerging from the current arrangements.

'It is essential to have a uniform approach to the supply of RATs across the states and territories.

'We urge all governments to ensure people with disability or other vulnerabilities, and the people who support them, have free and easy access to these tests.

'The community has been forced to 'learn to live with COVID'.

'In the face of the current impact of that policy the Federal Government has a responsibility to ensure the community is safe, that our hospitals and ambulance services are not overwhelmed and that essential community services can meet growing demand.

'Ready access to free RATs would go a long way to mitigating these issues.

'At the very least, the Minister for Families and Social Services should provide Emergency Relief not-for profit organisations with a supply of RATs for the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged people.

'The current arrangements constitute poor public policy and poor economic management. The community rightly expects stronger leadership in the face of this crisis,' Ms Victory said.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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