



MEDIA RELEASE

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CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA SAYS ACCURATE REPORTING KEY TO MANAGING COVID

Peak advisory body Catholic Health Australia has welcomed plans by the NSW Government to include rapid antigen test results in its daily case numbers and says the Government must now update the definition of fully vaccinated as people wait to receive their booster.

In a letter to NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard, CHA says accurate reporting is vital to give the public the full picture of community transmission, particularly as governments tell Australians to exercise personal responsibility for their COVID-19 safety.

CHA supports mandatory reporting of RAT test results, but says the full picture of the nation's fight against COVID-19 also needs to include more accurate vaccination rates by updating the definition of "fully vaccinated" to mean those who have had their booster shot, where recommended by ATAGI.

CHA's Health Policy Manager Alex Lynch says: "While some states have a headline 'fully-vaccinated' rate approaching 95%, this is becoming an increasingly poor descriptor of the protection vaccines are providing our community.

"If the community is being asked to take more responsibility for protecting themselves against COVID then they need the most accurate and up to date information and unfortunately they are not getting it."

Mr Lynch said: "We now know that COVID-19 vaccinations are losing effectiveness just months after the second dose is received. Evidence indicates that this is particularly true of the Omicron variant, with studies suggesting a booster can significantly increase protection.

"Currently, a significant proportion of those eligible for a booster shot have not received a booster. This means they can no longer be considered fully vaccinated. Even updating the Service NSW app to reflect an individual's status rather than relying on the current blanket message of 'Fully Vaccinated' after two jabs would be a step in the right direction."

Mr Lynch says many NSW residents under 16 are not vaccinated, with the parents of those aged between 5 and 11 struggling to arrange even a first jab for their children.

Notes to editors: Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia's largest non-government grouping of health and aged care services accounting for approximately 10 percent of hospital-based healthcare in Australia. Our members also provide around 25 percent of private hospital care, 5 percent of public hospital care, 12 percent of aged care facilities, and 20 percent of home care and support for the elderly.