



MEDIA RELEASE

MARCH 23 2020

CATHOLIC HOSPITALS CALL TO GOVT TO RELEASE GOWNS, GLOVES AND MASKS AS STOCKS ACROSS ITS NETWORK REACH CRITICAL LEVELS

Australia's largest grouping of not-for-profit health providers, Catholic Health Australia, is calling on the Morrison Government to release stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE) to its hospital staff as stocks in its network reach critically low levels.

The Catholic network has 80 hospitals - both public and private - and employs tens of thousands of nurses and clinical staff.

Requests by Catholic hospitals to access stocks of gowns, masks and gloves have been met with confusion, buck passing between the states and the Commonwealth and even a diktat that supplies will be released only to publicly owned hospitals.

Almost one in ten public hospital beds are located in Catholic hospitals but because they are not directly owned by the state they are being denied access to the stockpiles.

CHA Chief Executive Pat Garcia said in some cases PPE stocks in Catholic hospitals would run out in as little as a week and in a letter today has warned state, territory and federal health ministers of the imminent shortfall.

"We cannot have a situation where thousands of doctors and nurses are treating people unprotected - it's a shocking situation for patients, staff and the wider community. We need every weapon in our arsenal to fight the coronavirus and masks, gowns and gloves are the very basics. It would be like sending in our fireys to fight fires without a truck."

Mr Garcia said Catholic hospitals are running testing clinics, treating COVID-19 patients and ramping up the capacity in their wards and emergency departments to alleviate pressure on public hospitals.

"We are working with everyone in the wider health network to fight this virus. All we are asking for is the same access as the public network and for a clear and efficient way for our people to get hold of PPE supplies in a timely fashion."

Dr Shane Kelly, Chief Executive of the St John of God group, which runs 17 hospitals in Western Australia, Victoria and NSW, said time is running out.

"As of today if I can't get hold of some more PPE stocks, some of my hospitals will run out in a week. In order to protect nurses, doctors and other health care workers, and to help to



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reduce infections, we need sufficient stocks of gloves, gowns and masks to continue to operate, and we are just not getting the right information on how we can access the stockpile.

“We have been endeavouring to do everything we can to manage stocks but we cannot and will not compromise the safety of our staff and ultimately our patients.”

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