



MEDIA RELEASE

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CATHOLIC SECTOR WELCOMES ELECTIVE SURGERY BUT SAYS PPE STILL AN ISSUE

Australia's largest grouping of not-for-profit health providers, Catholic Health Australia, welcomes the gradual resumption of non-urgent elective surgery but says the safety of patients and staff is paramount and any extra work is contingent on sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE).

To ensure the safety of patients and hospital staff, and with shortages of PPE supply around the world, CHA says its hospitals need to continue to secure appropriate quantities of gloves, gowns and masks to minimise the risk of COVID-19 cross infections during operations.

Last month CHA highlighted the lack of access by the private and not-for-profit hospital sectors to national stockpiles of PPE and revealed some hospitals might run out of supplies within days.

CHA Chief Executive Officer Pat Garcia said: "We welcome the Government's move to resume non-urgent elective surgery. The fact that this is happening a month after the suspension of all but the most urgent operations is a testament to the success of the Governments' leadership in managing the spread of COVID-19.

"This move will be a welcome relief for the many people who can't wait much longer. Catholic not-for-profit hospitals support the safe resumption of non-urgent elective surgery but the safety of patients and health workers will remain the number one priority."

Mr Garcia also called on the States and Territories to finally sign up to the national partnership that saw 650 hospitals – including the Catholic and not-for-profit sector – enlisted to fight COVID-19.

"Our hospitals and thousands of staff have been on standby to fight COVID-19 for some weeks. If we are to maintain that level of flexibility and redeploy our services to undertake elective surgery as well then we need a requisite level of certainty, commitment and co-operation from the states and territories."

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