



CATHOLIC HEALTH

Australia

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I write on behalf of Catholic Health Australia (CHA), the largest non-government grouping of health, aged care and community health services in Australia.

Catholic hospitals account for nearly 20 per cent of all private and public hospital services delivered in Australia. They include public and non-profit hospitals provided by St Vincent's Health Australia, St John of God Health Care, Little Company of Mary Health Care, Mater, Mercy Health and Cabrini Health. This ministry is founded on the dignity of the human person, giving preference to the needy, suffering and disadvantaged.

Imminent shortage of Personal Protective Equipment

CHA non-profit and public hospitals, operating at the front lines of the covid-19 epidemic, have expressed grave concerns over their ability to access adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly masks and gowns. You would be aware that PPE is a vital component of infection control, protecting clinicians and patients from transmitting the virus. Without it, clinical staff will need to make difficult decisions about what services they can provide and which patients they can treat.

Our hospitals are enacting emergency preparedness procedures in response to the increasing presentations of covid-19 positive patients. In addition to supporting state and territory efforts to reduce covid-19 transmission, some hospitals are admitting positive patients and expanding their capacity for testing services to reduce the strain on state-run facilities.

To date our hospital groups have relied on their own supply channels for PPE, but vendors have now expressed concerns about their ability to supply PPE in the quantity and timeframes required. Faced with an imminent shortage of PPE, our hospitals have engaged with state and territory authorities to discuss the possibility of accessing national stockpiles.





These conversations have proven difficult for two reasons. First, many of our hospital groups have a national footprint of hospitals, and are therefore required to communicate with governments in multiple jurisdictions at the same time. This is proving administratively difficult. Second, our members have found it difficult to access information about the stockpiles of PPE. This information, once accessed, has proven to be unclear and convoluted.

We therefore request for our members' hospital administrators, clear lines of contact with state authorities, and explicit instructions on what is required in order to access supplies of PPE in a timely and expedient way.

The need for system-wide planning and discussions

CHA believes there is a need *to include our hospitals in the planning and allocation of necessary supplies.*

Commonwealth and State governments must consider the health system - both government run and non-government run hospitals - as one seamless network in the fight against COVID-19. This will ensure that supplies of PPE are managed for all clinicians who are treating or testing for COVID-19.

Our hospitals have continued to work constructively with states and territories to minimise the risks to staff and the wider community. We fear if we continue to face these barriers in access to vital supplies, particularly PPE, the result will be reduced access to hospital care for the community at a time when access to medical treatment is most critical.

We appreciate your prompt attention to these matters and await your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Pat Garcia
Chief Executive Officer
Catholic Health Australia

Copy:

The Hon Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research (NSW)

The Hon Jenny Mikakos, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services (VIC)

The Hon Roger Cook MLA, Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health (WA)

