



MEDIA RELEASE

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CRA urges the Federal Government to prioritise the elderly in their COVID-19 response

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has urged the Government to prioritise the elderly, particularly vulnerable Aged Care residents, in its management of COVID-19 in Australia, in a recent letter pointing out their neglect of the Aged Care Sector during the current Omicron outbreak.

CRA argued that the Federal government failed to provide adequate safeguards for Aged Care Homes before the re-opening of Australian society. An incomplete booster-shot rollout in Aged Care Facilities, shortages of PPE, RATs and staff, and lack of funding to recorrect services impacted by COVID-19, facilitated over 470 Aged Care resident untimely deaths from COVID-19, in the first few weeks of 2022 alone, as well as lockdowns across over a thousand infected facilities.

CRA also noted with concern the lack of transparency and accountability from the government on the reporting of COVID-19 in Aged Care facilities, with widespread inconsistencies in weekly reports, and an absence of publicly published data on the booster rollout.

“The Federal government, which oversees both the 2700 Aged Care homes in Australia, and the national COVID-19 vaccine rollout, has failed in its duty of care to our elderly. It is deeply troubling that the safety of our elderly, not to mention other vulnerable groups and peoples, was not prioritised during the Omicron outbreak,” said CRA President Peter Carroll FMS.

In its letter, CRA pointed out that the COVID-19 Pandemic has amplified the deep systemic problems in the Australian Aged Care Sector, as identified by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

“The Royal Commission highlighted that an absence of system leadership and governance lies at the heart of our broken Aged Care system. We have witnessed this during the Omicron outbreak, as the Federal government failed to adequately communicate with, coordinate and support the states, territories and aged care providers responding to COVID-19 on the ground,” said Anne Walker, CRA National Executive Director.

“We therefore call for an urgent overhaul of the governance of the Aged Care Sector in Australia, consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, to ensure the necessary strong leadership at a system level, and the formulation of transparent and health-expert informed plans for the Aged Care sector, ahead of future, imminent COVID-19 waves. Our elderly deserve no less,” she added.

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