



MEDIA STATEMENT

17 February 2021

CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AUSTRALIA AGAINST COVID-19 VACCINE NATIONALISM

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) is opposed to the stockpiling of COVID-19 vaccines by wealthy nations and supports an equitable distribution of vaccines around the globe, particularly to developing nations.

CRA echoes the concerns of the [UNICEF-WHO statement](#) released on 10 February 2021 which declares that more than three quarters of the 128 million COVID-19 vaccine doses administered so far have occurred in only 10 countries – countries that account for 60% of global GDP.

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, argue in the statement that unequal vaccination rates will allow COVID-19 strains to mutate, prolonging the pandemic, costing further lives and undermining the global economic recovery. They add that *“In the COVID-19 vaccine race, we either win together or lose together.”*

Wealthy nations that have been securing vaccine doses through bilateral deals with pharmaceutical manufacturers are creating competition, driving up prices, putting constraints on limited global supplies and preventing developing nations from accessing the vaccines – a strategy of ‘vaccine nationalism’ that not only fails to stand in solidarity with all people around the globe, but is self-defeating as it will allow for COVID-19 variants to develop.

CRA President, Peter Carroll FMS said, “We must practise fraternity, not only to ensure justice for developing nations, but to truly put an end to the COVID-19 Pandemic, which has exacerbated many pre-existing inequities, both in Australian society and globally. We now have a clear choice to either continue down the same path or begin a process of recovery that builds a more just world, starting with the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally.”

Anne Walker, National Executive Director of CRA added, “We commend the Australian government for changing their position and announcing that free vaccines will be available for all people residing in Australia, including those on temporary protection visas and bridging visas, refugees, asylum seekers and those in detention facilities, even where their visa has been cancelled.” She also praised the financial commitment of the Australian government to ensure the vaccination of our neighbours in the Pacific Islands, Timor-Leste and South-East Asia. However, for many low and middle-income countries, uncertainty over access to COVID-19 vaccines remains.

CRA supports WHO in its call for wealthy governments to promptly donate any surplus vaccines and to make financial contributions to ensure that vaccines can be safely developed, manufactured and deployed to developing nations.

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