



MEDIA RELEASE

MARCH 19, 2020

CATHOLIC HOSPITALS WELCOME UK INITIATIVE TO LOOK AFTER CHILDREN OF HEALTH WORKERS IN COVID19 SCHOOL SHUTDOWN

Australia's largest grouping of not-for-profit health providers, Catholic Health Australia, has welcomed the news that the United Kingdom government will make provisions for health workers when it closes the nation's schools tomorrow.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson [said](#) it would make sure the children of essential workers would be looked after thereby ensuring their parents can continue to do their jobs.

On Wednesday CHA [called on governments](#) to put in place similar measures in the event of the mass closure of Australian schools.

CHA is concerned about the impact of school closures on the ability of its member hospitals to fight the coronavirus. The Catholic network has 80 hospitals - both public and private - and employs tens of thousands of nurses and clinical staff, of which about 80 per cent of them are women many of them with school age children.

It is estimated that a third of health workers in Australia would be forced to stay at home and look after their children if schools are closed.

CHA Chief Executive Pat Garcia welcomed Prime Minister Johnson's decision.

"There a number of practical and sensible measures that the Government can take to ensure our nurses and clinical staff can remain at their posts in the event of schools closing. We are glad to see a nation like the United Kingdom join Belgium and Norway in taking this very important step.

"The last thing we need is for a third of our health workers to be taken away from their posts to look after their children. It is crucial that they can continue to do their job - which is to look after the sick."

Mr Garcia added: "One option might be to, where appropriate, provide resources to ensure the children of health workers can remain supervised by staff at school during school hours – and potentially beyond. This would require relatively small adjustments and funding, but would make a real difference.



CATHOLIC HEALTH
Australia

"In conjunction, the government, where appropriate, should call upon organisations that employ the partners of nurses and other health workers to ensure they can access paid leave in the case of school closures."