



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **CATHOLIC AGED CARE OPERATORS STEP UP TO THE MARK ON VACCINATION TARGETS**

The Catholic residential aged care sector has spoken about how – against all odds – its members rose to the challenge of vaccinating their staff by the Commonwealth’s mid-September deadline.

Clear and inclusive communication, surveying and involving staff early on, establishing clinics in facilities, and ensuring excess vaccines were not wasted but diverted to aged care workers, were just some of the tactics they employed

Catholic Health Australia CEO Pat Garcia called the sector-wide effort outstanding and a credit to their mission – to keep their workers and the wider community safe during the pandemic.

In June, when Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced all residential aged care workers must have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by September 17, many were sceptical.

With two-thirds of the sector’s workers still unvaccinated, how could it meet the deadline, while dealing with issues such as vaccine shortages, hesitancy, and staffing during a pandemic?

This week several key CHA aged care operators have recounted how their organisations did it.

Paul Johnson, COO, Ballycara, Queensland, says: “We began our campaign early, with posters and communications to all staff from April onwards.

“We succeeded through good, positive communication and engagement, having the ease of an on-site clinic with a simple booking system, and working closely in partnership with the vaccine provider.”

Helen Emmerson, CEO, Southern Cross Care NSW and ACT, says most of her workers had already had their shot before the September mandate came into effect.

“For most of our staff I think getting vaccinated provided them with reassurance. Together it does feel like we’re starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Wayne Stoddard, Group Manager, Residential Care Services, Southern Cross Care, SA and NT, says his group prioritised allowing staff to access unused vaccines.

“Knowing staff could access remaining doses from our residences, we surveyed staff to find out any barriers for vaccination. This developed a running database to identify which staff members were available at short notice for any remaining.”



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James Lye, Executive Director, Marketing, Communications and Stakeholder Relations, Mercy Health Australia, says there was very little vaccine hesitancy, with most staff, after experiencing the tragedy from 2020, seeing a benefit in protecting their family and clients in aged care.

“We took a multifaceted approach to vaccinations, in an environment where we were trying to keep our residents and staff safe. We quickly saw the vaccine picking up where things such as infection control, hygiene practices and single-site work had previously been the only things holding back the tide of people getting really sick from COVID.”

Mr Garcia said: “I am extremely proud of what the Catholic aged care sector has achieved in such difficult times.

“The professional, cooperative and caring approach shown by management and staff shows how much can be achieved when we all work together.”

For the full story go to the [CHA website](#).