



FRANCIS SULLIVAN APPOINTED CHAIR OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA LTD

27 October 2020

Francis Sullivan has been elected the new chair of Catholic Social Services Australia Ltd during the first meeting of the entity since its recent consolidation.

Mr Sullivan has held a number of significant roles within and beyond the Catholic Church, including as chief executive officer of Catholic Health Australia and as secretary general of the Australian Medical Association. As CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, he led the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

He is currently the executive chair of the board at Mater Group, which comprises several hospitals, health centres, an education provider and a research institute.

Mr Sullivan takes over the role from Maria Harries, who had served as chair of Catholic Social Services Australia for the past seven years.

Paying tribute to Dr Harries, Mr Sullivan said "Catholic Social Services Australia has been led with great commitment and determination in recent years, and I know her legacy in this organisation is profound".

"What I can promise is that I will bring a similar passion for the Church's outreach to the people our social service agencies support and for whom CSSA advocates," he said.

"The rich Catholic understanding of the dignity of every person, the preferential option for the poor and the pursuit of the common good will continue to motivate the work of the CSSA board."

Dr Harries' professional life has been dedicated to assisting children and families, particularly in relation to mental health and trauma associated with their experiences of abuse and violence.

In her report to the recent annual general meeting, she told members: "CSSA embodies the image of open arms everywhere – represented by our members who have not retreated one centimetre during the additional challenges we have all faced." She explained that "COVID-19 is the second pandemic; the first pandemic is poverty".

Catholic Social Services Australia CEO Ursula Stephens has welcomed the new executive team who will help to shape the future of the consolidated entity.

"The board has a strong vision for the future of CSSA as the national voice for the social services mission of the Church. Francis brings to the board a depth of wisdom and experience that will guide our organisation through the challenges of addressing the injustices made evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as we all engage in restorative and healing services so necessary for the most vulnerable within our communities," Dr Stephens said.

Sr Kathleen Tierney RSM was elected to the role of deputy chair and Michael Austin, CEO of CatholicCare Wollongong, as treasurer.

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The national network of Catholic social services