



Rural Disability and Indigenous groups at higher risk of COVID 19 infection as NSW opens up

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The Catholic Church's peak social services group, Catholic Social Services Australia, has warned that as NSW prepares to loosen COVID 19 restrictions regional disability and Indigenous community members may be at greater risk of infection.

Francis Sullivan, Chair of CSSA, said today that some regional communities are well behind in their vaccination rates, which leaves the vulnerable communities in those areas particularly susceptible to COVID infections.

"Both the Government and the health authorities have accepted that cases will increase as NSW and Australia opens up," Mr Sullivan said.

"Despite the recent announcement of extra funding to fast-track vaccinations in Indigenous communities the gap between Indigenous vaccination rates is still significant.

"While a recent report by the Disability Royal Commission also found that the Federal Government had "de-prioritised" vaccinations for people with disabilities in favour of aged care residents."

Mr Sullivan said that people living with disabilities and in Indigenous communities are highly vulnerable while at the same time health services in regional communities are under huge pressure.

"Regional towns with small rural hospitals, with doctors and nurses that have been working tirelessly for 18 months and community groups with low vaccination rates and higher than average vaccine hesitance will place a lot of pressure on local health services.

"This has the potential to be a recipe for disaster," Mr Sullivan said.

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