

Catholic health plea to protect jab objectors

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Catholic health workers in hospitals and aged care have asked for clear safeguards against discrimination and “undue burdens” for staff who claim a “conscientious objection” to mandatory Covid-19 vaccination.

In a written appeal to all government leaders, the Australian Catholic Medical Association, representing workers in Catholic hospitals and aged-care centres, has asked for protection for workers who will not be vaccinated on conscientious grounds.

ACMA expresses its concern about the growing push for mandatory vaccinations for some health workers.

“As medical professionals, we understand and support the need to safeguard people from the terrible Covid-19 virus,” the letter says. “However, we are growing increasingly concerned by the push to make Covid-19 vaccination mandatory, including in healthcare settings.”

Recently, the Australian Catholics Bishops Conference held that “no one should be - coerced to receive any vaccine” and that “vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation”.

The Catholic medical workers have asked Scott Morrison and the state and territory leaders for the principle to be applied to medical practitioners.

“Indeed, Catholic teaching holds that no one should be forced to have a vaccine or be discriminated against for exercising a conscientious objection,” the letter says.

There are more than 83,000 employees in Catholic health institutions including 75 hospitals and 550 aged-care facilities.

The Catholic health workers’ group said it believed it was possible to keep patients safe even with conscientious objections apply.

“As healthcare professionals we all want to work in and promote a safe working environment, and we believe it is possible to achieve this without a policy of forced vaccination.

“For example, health and aged-care agencies could apply additional safeguards and risk mitigation strategies around those staff with conscientious objections, such as regular rapid antigen testing, which would respect the importance of conscience while ensuring a safe environment for both staff and patients, particularly the vulnerable.”