



Health plan ignores poor



THE needs of Australia's most vulnerable are ignored in the Federal Government's health reform plan, Catholic Health Australia says.

CHA chief executive Martin Laverty urged all candidates in the August 21 Federal Election to prioritise the health needs of disadvantaged Australians.

"A person's health should not be determined by their wealth," he said.

"People living in socio-economic disadvantage are sicker and die earlier than people of more affluence.

"The reform agenda has largely ignored Australia's most vulnerable." CHA is the largest single grouping of non-government health, aged and community care services in Australia.

On any given day, one-in-

10 of all Australians in a hospital or residential aged care bed is being cared for in a Catholic facility.

Mr Laverty said the organisation had called for commitments to making the health of the poor a measurable outcome as part of the health plan.

He said the health reform had also failed to include private hospitals.

In SA, Mr Laverty said the Federal Government needed to address why health funds in the state paid about 10 per cent less for services than the national average.

"That means health funds in SA are not delivering the same service as in the rest of the country," he said.

"If we want a sustainable hospital network in SA the pressure that is put on private

hospitals needs to be addressed."

Other election priorities identified by CHA include:

ESTABLISHING a Health Reform Implementation Advisory Council comprising non-government experts to help the reform process achieve maximum benefits for all Australians;

ENSURING a choice of quality aged care is available to every Australian who needs it;

IMPROVING Australia's palliative care services to provide care to all who seek it and;

SETTING a new target to reduce the gap in life expectancy between the least disadvantaged and the population average.