JUST HEALTH CARE FOR AGED AUSTRALIANS:
A ROMAN CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE

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November 1997
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ABSTRACT

*Just Health Care for Aged Australians: a Roman Catholic Perspective* provides a philosophical and theological analysis of health care for aged persons. It explores the ways in which Roman Catholic moral theory might contribute to the development of just health care for aged Australians.

The thesis is divided into four parts. Part I surveys aged care policies in Australia until 1992 (chapter 1). This provides the context for the philosophical and theological analyses that follow. In light of defects present in Australian aged care, chapter 2 offers a humanistic reflection on three problematic questions concerned with the meaning of aging, well-being and care.

Part II is a bioethical analysis of just health care for aged persons. The context outlined in chapter 3 provides sufficient background to appreciate the contribution of two American bioethicists who have published extensively on the topic. Chapter 4 presents the liberal approach of Norman Daniels and the communitarian perspective of Daniel Callahan. Chapter 5 criticises their thinking in reference to two justice questions: the policy proposal of an age criterion for health care delivery and the nature and scope of the obligations adult children have to care for aged parents (the so-called intergenerational obligations question).

The form of the theological analysis in Part III mirrors the form of the bioethical analysis in Part II. Having established, in chapter 6, the relevance of Roman Catholic moral theory for the inquiry, chapter 7 revisits the three meaning questions studied earlier and frames them within a number of theological givens which effectively transform their meaning. Chapter 8 then sets out three key theological notions central to Roman Catholic thinking: the human person, the common good and justice as preferential option for the poor. These provide the key for developing the theological conclusions of chapter 9 in reference to the two justice questions of the age criterion proposal and the question of intergenerational obligations.

Part IV brings together the philosophical and theological analyses of Parts II and III and presents a number of conclusions, implications and proposals relevant to just health care for aged Australians.