

Caritas Australia thanks communities for uniting against poverty this Lent.

As Project Compassion 2026 comes to a close, Caritas Australia has today extended its heartfelt thanks to communities across the country for once again uniting against poverty, as schools, parishes and supporters took up this year's powerful call to justice, solidarity, and hope.

Inspired by the theme *Unite Against Poverty*, Project Compassion 2026 drew on a poignant moment from John's Gospel, when Jesus prays on the night before his death, "*that they may all be one*" (John 17:23). It is a prayer for unity, for people to stay together, to work together, and to embody a mission where the dignity and leadership of those on the margins are central.

Reflecting on this, **Kirsten Sayers CEO of Caritas Australia** said, "Throughout Lent, this call to unity came to life in classrooms, parishes, school halls, cathedrals and churches across Australia, as communities joined in faith-filled reflection and practical action to help create lasting change."

Project Compassion 2026 was officially launched across the country with a series of vibrant diocesan, parish and school events, celebrating the collective spirit that defines Australia's largest Catholic fundraising and awareness-raising appeal.

St Mary's Cathedral College in Sydney hosted a school's launch, which was also featured on the *Today Show*, helping amplify the message of unity and action to audiences nationwide. In Melbourne, MacKillop College hosted the schools launch, welcoming guests from 14 primary and secondary schools.

In Brisbane, the Project Compassion launch at St Stephen's Cathedral brought together 80 schools and more than 560 students, reflecting the strong commitment of young people to issues of justice, dignity, and global solidarity.

South Australia saw its Adelaide launch hosted at St Francis de Sales School, welcoming three visiting schools and more than 1,000 attendees. A further seven schools and more than 350 students united through the Caritas 6km run or 3km walk along Adelaide's beaches, combining physical challenge with compassion in action.

In Perth, more than 30 schools attended or tuned in for the Schools Launch at Sacred Heart College, Sorrento. Across Tasmania, three launches were hosted in Launceston, Burnie, and Hobart, highlighting the strength of Project Compassion participation across the state. In the Northern Territory, nine schools from the Diocese of Darwin attended the launch at St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral.

The Parramatta Diocese schools launch at St John XXIII Catholic College in Stanhope Gardens was attended by more than 200 student leaders from primary and secondary schools across the diocese. More than 700 students and staff from 23 Parramatta schools also came together for Caritas Australia's Big Water Walk, walking in solidarity with communities around the world who face daily barriers to clean water.

Parish launches also took place right across the country, including longstanding public traditions such as the Sandhurst Diocese's Shrove Tuesday launch in Hargreaves Mall, Bendigo. In Canberra, parishioners took part in a launch at Saint Christophers Cathedral, led by Archbishop Christopher Prowse.

In Adelaide, approximately 1,000 people attended Mass at the Vietnamese Our Lady of the Boat People Church, where Caritas Australia CEO Kirsten Sayers reflected on the call to unity and shared how Project Compassion supports communities to drive their own development. In Perth parishioners also gathered for a parish launch at St Mary's

Cathedral, where Mass was celebrated by Bishop Don.

“Each year, around 1,700 schools and 1,200 parishes take part in Project Compassion. The scale of individual effort, creativity and passion shown by students, teachers, parishioners, and volunteers is vast, and I wish I could recognise and thank each of you individually. What I can say is that collectively, your efforts contribute to the raising around \$10 million annually, making a significant difference to Caritas Australia’s local partners overseas and the communities in need they serve.

“Caritas Australia thanks every person who has prayed, learned, acted, and given this Lent. Together, through unity and faith in action, Australians are helping build a more just world where all people can thrive,” concluded **Kirsten Sayers**.

You can still donate to support Project Compassion via a donation box or donation envelopes in your community, by calling 1800 024 413 toll free or visiting www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion

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