

# THE JOY OF OUR HOPE

**Caritas Australia  
Strategic Direction  
2021 - 2031**





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In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God...Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.

– Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 244.



Manide children run through their community in Camarines Norte, Philippines. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



# INTRODUCTION FROM THE CEO

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For over fifty years, Caritas Australia has worked alongside our partners in the most marginalised and remote communities, to challenge poverty and inequality. During that time, the world has changed enormously and we must adapt to this rapidly changing context – a world in which conflict, displacement, extreme weather and diseases are increasingly common. This Strategic Direction is intended to build on our strengths and learning from our previous Strategic Plan to take us forward into a future where we will need to be more agile and resilient than ever before.

To develop our outcomes, we consulted with our staff, partners and Caritas Internationalis partners, as well as the Caritas Australia Board of Directors, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, the Diocesan Directors' network and our extensive volunteers' network. We also consulted with other non-government organisations (NGOs) in our sector, university partners and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

This new plan is not just built on a foundation of learning, research, collaboration, experience and expertise but is grounded in the Catholic Social Traditions of our Church. This Strategic Direction represents our ongoing commitment to work alongside the most vulnerable, and to address the imbalance of power by including the people affected in the decisions impacting their lives.

We know that, in collaboration with the people we serve, we can build a world that is just and peaceful. Alone, we cannot solve global poverty and inequity, but when we work through robust partnerships to address the structures that perpetuate inequalities, we can build a world in which all of God's creation thrives, and where all people reach their full potential.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices are located. In Australia, our offices are located on the lands of the Gadigal of the Eora Nation in Alexandria, the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation in Melbourne, the Whadjuk of the Noongar Nation in Perth, the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples in Brisbane, and the Ngunnawal People in Canberra. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of First Australians.





# UNPRECEDENTED TIMES CALL FOR UNPRECEDENTED MEASURES

Tarsini with her Saving and Loans Group near her home in Jakarta, Indonesia.  
Photo: Laz Harfa.

**We have entered an era of increasing complexity and uncertainty, as the global community faces profound political, social, economic, and technological changes. As global conflicts, environmental disasters and health crises increase, Caritas Australia faces growing challenges in achieving our Mission.**

## Information communication technologies

Technology offers 'great potential to accelerate human progress' (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), yet the rapid development of information communication technologies means that some of the world's poorest communities are at risk of being left behind. Communities which lack basic infrastructure and digital literacy and rely on informal labour are likely to experience a widening gap of inequality in the future as more informal labour is automated and technology continues to rapidly develop.

## COVID-19

COVID-19 has the greatest impact on communities which already lack basic resources, including clean water, sanitation and health care. Communities reliant on informal labour are also highly vulnerable, as they are unable to withstand long-term loss of income. It is these communities which will take the longest to recover and rebuild and face severe, long-lasting impacts of COVID-19.

## Climate change

As stated in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' Encyclical on ecology, the effects of climate change will have significant impacts on the most marginalised and vulnerable communities. As extreme weather events increase in severity and frequency, the ability of the communities we work with to withstand, recover and rebuild from disaster will be greatly threatened.

## Aid budget uncertainty

Regular reductions in the aid budget since 2014/15 mean that there is less funding for international development and aid programs just as global challenges are increasing. The added pressure of stretching diminishing resources to partners and participants who are facing greater challenges than ever is shared by the entire sector.

## Localisation

Localisation is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, however we will continue to face challenges in ensuring that localisation is effective. Key challenges include building trust with partners, negotiating cultural nuances, embracing adaptive change management and ensuring that understandings of protection, accountability and representation are aligned.

## Competitive fundraising marketplace

We operate in an increasingly competitive fundraising marketplace, where numerous organisations vie for limited philanthropic and public donations. More creative and strategic fundraising approaches that cut through, make an impact and deliver a strong return on investment will be necessary to remain competitive in the future.



# ABOUT CARITAS AUSTRALIA



Salma and her baby Samiul from Project Compassion, 2019.  
Photo: Ashish Peter Gomes/Caritas Australia

## Caritas Australia is Compassion in Action. Forging a just world together.

For over 50 years, Caritas Australia has worked hand-in-hand with the most marginalised and remote communities in Australia and overseas, to confront the challenges of poverty. Through locally-led programs we work towards a world where all can thrive and reach their full potential.

As the international aid and development agency of the Catholic Church in Australia, Caritas Australia works with and for all people, to address immediate needs and long-term goals, regardless of religion, ethnicity or political beliefs.

Through Caritas Internationalis, one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world, we are able to reach where the need is greatest, through local Church networks and organisations.

We accompany communities to build on existing local strengths and resources, supporting them to drive their own development for more transformative and sustainable change. When a crisis hits, Caritas Australia partners with local organisations and Church partners to bring aid and relief to people whose lives have been devastated by natural disaster or conflict.

We advocate for social and ecological justice for those most impacted by inequality. Above all, with shared compassion and hope, we work towards a just world for all.





# INSPIRATION, VISION AND MISSION

Thandolwayo washes her face from the new water pipe.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

## Inspiration

Caritas Australia is inspired by the Gospel which finds its expression in Catholic Social Traditions.

Jesus returned as a young adult to his home town of Nazareth (Luke 4: 16-30). He had just returned from forty days in the desert, a time of encounter with both darkness and light. He chose light. Coming home, he knew this meant a fresh way of understanding himself and the world. He was to be an agent for change, for loving relationships. He had a vision of freedom. It is a vision we share, one of justice, dignity and hope.

## Vision

Justice, dignity and hope for humanity and all of God’s creation.

### Justice

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
For he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the  
poor.



### Dignity

He has sent me to proclaim release  
to captives,  
Sight to the blind, to let  
the oppressed go free.



### Hope

To proclaim a year of the  
Lord’s favour.



## Mission

In the spirit of the Gospel, we work in partnership with communities in Australia and overseas to achieve their development goals and to thrive.

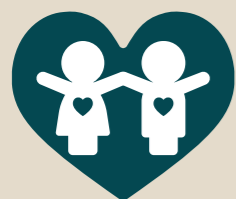


# VALUES

Our values are an expression of our heart



Evangeline from Project Compassion 2016.  
Photo: Danielle Lyons/Caritas Australia.



**I am proud of my potential and strength that was hidden before. I will bring up my daughter with dignity. I will make her a bright life.**

Jamila, twenty-two year old Rohingya refugee living in a camp in Cox's Bazar.

## ✿ Courage

Jesus did not want to die on the cross. He prayed that he wouldn't have to. At the same time, he accepted that his father wanted him to walk a lonely and difficult path towards fullness of life.

Caritas Australia stands at the foot of the cross. We make bold decisions in faith. We ask difficult questions about the nature of society and its underlying assumptions. We sometimes act in the face of complacency and criticism. We stand alongside people who are pushed out of other conversations. We are engaged in a vigorous arm-wrestle with the complacency of a culture that is often indifferent to suffering beyond our borders. Above all, we work for justice for all people.



**We've got Sydney's largest Aboriginal population here, so I think people need to know that there's a place that they can come to and they're welcome.**

Jenny Ebsworth, founder and Director of Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation, one of our First Australian partners.

## ✿ Partnership

Jesus loved people. He travelled with them, ate with them, washed their feet, joked with them. He spent time with those by the wayside: the woman at the well, the blind man of Jericho, the man called Legion who harmed himself with rocks.

Caritas Australia is an agent of joy. We are a wonderful network of relationships between people, all of whom have their own story and their own understanding of life's mystery. We try to be as open as Jesus was, especially to the possibilities for those who long for healing. We exist to contribute to that healing, to celebrate the capability of those we encounter. We are servants, not judges. We try to respond to real needs, not the needs we imagine. We do not create co-dependents. Caritas Australia does not want to live in a divided world. We want to walk hand in hand with the people who welcome us into their lives and communities.





# VALUES

Our values are an expression of our heart

Community members dance and sing about water next to their new water pipe in Zimbabwe. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.



During the rainy season houses and crops were destroyed by flooding almost every year. We have now planted trees along the riverbank to prevent erosion, which are maintained by the whole community.

Afonso, farmer and community leader in Timor-Leste.

## ✿ Stewardship

Jesus spoke often about care for the earth and its resources. He showed that a few loaves and fish could be enough if people sat down together and shared what they had. He spoke about the right use of talents, and he lived in harmony with the sea and the seasons.

Caritas Australia has a profound commitment to care for the earth and stewardship for creation. We also have a deep sense of gratitude for the resources entrusted to us by our supporters. There are many who give from their hearts, people who make sacrifices so they can help the poor we serve together. Their stories are a constant inspiration. We honour them through our dedication, probity and transparency. We honour them by making decisions based on substance. We honour the earth, our common home, through the sensitivity of our homemaking.



Before the project, our village was isolated. Now people have changed. You came for us in the bush, and our lives are different.

Daniel, a farmer returned to South Sudan after years of displacement.

## ✿ Compassion

Jesus welcomed inconvenience. He was comfortable with human chaos and the otherness of nature. His life was constantly interrupted by the needs of strangers whom he enveloped in compassion. He used stories about banquets to talk about radical hospitality: a place where all would be welcome.

Caritas Australia understands that compassion involves our whole being: our heart, hands and head. Our emotional response to poverty moves us to think deeply with our partners about the most constructive response to them. This leads to committed and active relationships. In turn, this leads us back to a heartfelt response and the circle of transformation continues. Compassion is not a transitory experience. St Ignatius of Loyola spoke of *discreta caritas* which means discerning love. Discerning caritas. We hope that our compassion is the source of wisdom and fidelity. Guided by the Spirit, we work for the long haul, for the liberation of all creation.



# OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

As Caritas Australia, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which our offices are based. This is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Reconciliation is an ongoing commitment to justice and dignity and we are strengthening our commitment to reconciliation by:

- embedding reconciliation-focused outcomes in the Strategic Direction,
- bringing our Reconciliation Action Plan to life,
- strengthening our commitment to our First Australian Program that has been ongoing since 1972,
- continuing to listen to and be informed by our First Australian partners, including collaborating on initiatives such as our Joint Statement of Subsidiarity.

This Strategic Direction has been informed by our First Australian Program partners. Their aspirations are reflected in the reconciliation-focused outcomes throughout.

We recognise that the path of reconciliation - both as individuals and as an organisation - is a lifelong journey.

Reconciliation is not a quick fix or an easy solution. We will be learning from each other and stumbling along together, with the intention of continually growing.

Reconciliation involves change. Change within each of us, and change in the wider world. It may not always be comfortable but it's important work to do.

We will hold ourselves accountable by seeking feedback from our First Australian partners.



As human beings, we have more in common than differences. Let's celebrate these differences because that's how we learn from each other.

– John Lochowiak,  
Chair of NATSICC  
(National Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander Catholic Council, one  
of Caritas Australia's First Australian  
Program partners)



# THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD. ✿

## Caritas Australia Strategic Goals

- 1 All people, especially women, are supported to lead their development and thrive.
- 2 All people, especially the most marginalised, experience wellbeing and live in safe, just societies.
- 3 A common home where all people are resilient and achieve sustainable livelihoods and ecological justice.
- 4 Communities affected by conflict and disasters can meet their immediate needs, and recover and build back stronger from crises.



You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his.

- Pope Paul VI,  
Populorum Progressio

A mother and child look out from their traditional hut in Camarines Norte, Philippines.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.





Arsad poses for a photograph with his family in Jakarta, Indonesia. Photo: Laz Harfa.

# 1 STRATEGIC GOAL

**All people, especially women, are supported to lead their development and thrive.**

## ■ The global context for change

In many countries, women and girls experience poorer health, nutrition and education outcomes and are more likely to experience sexual and gender-based violence or early marriage. Yet many women and girls are not consulted in decisions affecting their lives.

In order to achieve our goals, we will continue to prioritise subsidiarity and localisation, and support communities to drive their own development. We will continue to integrate advocacy into our programs, and build the capacity of our partners and communities to advocate for positive change. We will also focus on supporting local leadership of women and other marginalised voices.

## ■ What will success look like?



### Local Leadership

People most vulnerable to experiencing poverty and marginalisation, especially women, are empowered to lead their own individual development and that of their community.



### Subsidiarity

Empowered local organisations are leading change.



### Advocacy & Influence

Individuals and communities are able to participate in governance processes and influence policy and decision-making on issues affecting them.



### Advocacy & Truth Telling

First Australians lead in decisions that affect their lives and change attitudes through education and truth telling.





Cambodian school students.  
Photo: Nicole Clements/Caritas Australia.

## 2 STRATEGIC GOAL

All people, especially the most marginalised, experience wellbeing and live in safe, just societies.

### ■ The global context for change

According to the World Bank, global poverty rates are likely to increase, with as many as 150 million people living in extreme poverty by 2021. The communities reliant on informal labour, with limited access to adequate clean water, sanitation and health care have been the most severely impacted by COVID-19 and the related economic recession, and will also take the longest to recover and rebuild.

We believe that human rights can only be achieved when all people are able to reach their full potential. In order to achieve our goals, we will take a multifaceted approach to address the broad structural issues which drive inequality at national and international levels. We will seek to join, build and strengthen coalitions for the protection of those most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

### ■ What will success look like?



#### **Basic Rights & Needs**

People most vulnerable to experiencing poverty and marginalisation have safe, equitable and adequate access to basic services.



#### **Protection**

People who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, especially women, children and young people, are safe at home and in the community.



#### **Peace**

People and communities most vulnerable to conflict live in just, peaceful and harmonious societies.



#### **Wellbeing**

First Australian-led programs promote the holistic wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.





Children in Papua New Guinea.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 3 STRATEGIC GOAL

**A common home where all people are resilient and achieve sustainable livelihoods and ecological justice.**

## ■ The global context for change

Seventy-five per cent of the poorest households in the world are dependent on farming for nutrition and income, which puts them at increased risk of food insecurity and poverty (FAO). Yet women and girls, First Nations communities and people living with disabilities often have reduced access to and management of natural resources, and lower participation rates in local markets. The increase in drought, famines and extreme weather events as a result of a changing climate also leaves communities less time to rebuild and recover between crises.

In order to achieve our goals, we will continue to support sustainable livelihoods programs to improve the economic wellbeing, food security, nutrition and resilience of the most vulnerable. We will embed a commitment to ecological justice throughout our programs, so that households and communities are able to live in harmony with their surroundings and advocate for action on the drivers of climate change that impact their livelihoods.

## ■ What will success look like?



### Livelihoods

People most vulnerable to experiencing extreme poverty and marginalisation have secure and sustainable livelihoods.



### Financial Resilience

Households and communities are resilient to shocks and stressors.



### Ecological Justice

Households and communities are able to protect and sustainably manage their environment.



### Custodianship

Recognition of First Australian connection to the land and approaches to caring for Country lead to improved environmental and social outcomes.





Janaki chatting with friends in their village. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 4 STRATEGIC GOAL

**Communities affected by conflict and disasters can meet their immediate needs, and recover and build back stronger from crises.**

## ■ The global context for change

Disaster and violent conflict have forced 79.5 million people from their homes (UNHCR). Displaced people also face increasing challenges in returning home, leaving millions of people living in unstable conditions for years on end. There is an ongoing need for effective humanitarian response, but also increased support to build resilient communities that can prepare for disasters, and recover and rebuild.

In order to achieve our goals, we will continue to support responses to disaster and conflict through the Caritas Internationalis network and our local partnerships. We will also maintain focus on our long-term development work to promote resilience in communities prone to extreme weather events. We will continue to prioritise the participation and protection of the people most vulnerable to the impacts of disasters, including people living with disability, women and children, and ensure that our responses reflect their lived needs and priorities.

## ■ What will success look like?



### Preparedness & Risk-reduction

Communities and households are resilient in the face of natural or human crises.



### Response & Recovery

Responses to disasters and crises are locally led, and local actors are empowered to respond in a timely and effective manner.



### Inclusion & Equity

Vulnerable people have increased agency and influence in disaster response and recovery.



# THE CHANGE WE WANT TO SEE IN CARITAS AUSTRALIA ✨

## Caritas Australia Strategic Goals

5

Caritas Australia is a vibrant, impact-focused organisation, committed to ongoing learning.

6

Caritas Australia cultivates broad funding streams with a growing level of income.

7

Caritas Australia attracts and retains motivated staff and volunteers and nurtures effective partnerships.

8

Caritas Australia inspires all Australians, especially the Catholic community, to advocate and act.



I alone cannot change the world,  
but I can cast a stone across the  
waters to create many ripples.

-St Mother Teresa

July carries a child on her back in Tanzania.  
Photo: August Lucky.





Barry teaching his daughter dot painting at his home in Bateman's Bay, Australia.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 5 STRATEGIC GOAL

**Caritas Australia is a vibrant, impact-focused organisation, committed to ongoing learning.**

## ✿ Why this goal?

We seek to achieve the most effective and durable results for the communities we work with. This goal requires a commitment to ensuring that we implement the best practices in all our programs. We will achieve this by learning from research and experience, and responding agilely to changes in context.

## ■ What will success look like?



### Measure

We measure the things that matter most – the outcomes of investments and activities that create social change.



### Learn & Collaborate

Driven by a common purpose, we work collaboratively, take considered risks, learn from success and failure and continually improve.



### Innovate

We find new ways to address challenging problems, and embrace technology to support our goals.



### Lead

We are recognised as driving best practice in the sectors where we work.



### Reconciliation

First Australian perspectives and priorities inform Caritas Australia's policies, programs and strategic direction.





Bayan and her friends participating in the Caritas Education Program. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 6 STRATEGIC GOAL

**Caritas Australia cultivates broad funding streams with a growing level of income.**

**✦ Why this goal?**

We recognise that increasing global complexities and challenges mean that we will need to evolve and adapt. By harnessing new technologies and new ways of working, we aim to diversify our funding streams to protect against future threats. In order to achieve this goal, we will strive to ensure that we implement the best practices and are innovative in our approach.

## What will success look like?



**Stewardship**

We have a strong global presence with efficient and effective stewardship of resources.



**Growth**

We have the resources to deliver on this strategic plan.



**Diversification**

We have diversified funding streams with innovative ways of generating income.



**Institutional Partnerships**

We partner with aligned institutional funders in the achievement of our mission.





Phany walks her daughter to school in Pursat District, Western Cambodia. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 7 STRATEGIC GOAL

**Caritas Australia attracts and retains motivated staff and volunteers and nurtures effective partnerships.**

**Why this goal?**

We work through partnerships to make sure that our approach responds to local needs and context. We will strive to strengthen our partnerships with local organisations and church partners, and increase our partnerships with other NGOs, networks and academia. Throughout this, we will continue to focus on training and capacity-building in the Australian and overseas offices to ensure that our workforce is diverse, skilled and motivated.

**What will success look like?**



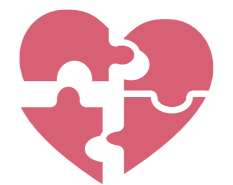
**Values**

Our values, grounded in Catholic Social Traditions, are evident in all that we do.



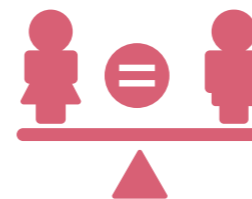
**People**

We bring out the best in our people, and work together towards our shared mission.



**Reconciliation**

Employment opportunities for First Australians are an integral part of a diverse workforce, along with growing a deeper cultural competency of staff, Board members and volunteers.



**Equity & Diversity**

We are an organisation in which all people can thrive, with equitable and diverse leadership.



**Partnerships**

We have effective, values-driven partnerships that enable strong collective impact.





Janaki with her students as she teaches them how to sew.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.

# 8 STRATEGIC GOAL

**Caritas Australia inspires all Australians, especially the Catholic community, to advocate and act.**

**Why this goal?**

We recognise that it is vital to engage our supporters and the Catholic community to act on issues affecting the people we work with. We believe that it is important to inspire our supporters to promote change through public engagement. We will achieve this through advocacy and outreach programs, and continue to build on our strengths in community engagement in schools and parishes in Australia.

## What will success look like?



**Youth Leadership**

Youth are empowered and supported to connect locally and globally to drive social change.



**Catholic Church & Community**

The Catholic Community, including Church leaders, are inspired to advocate and act.



**Australian Community**

Caritas Australia is wider Australia.



**Advocacy**

We are a trusted voice in advocacy, and have demonstrated impact in promoting positive change as an agency of the Catholic Church.



# HOLDING OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE

This document outlines our commitments to the people we support and those who support us. We are committed to holding ourselves accountable for the delivery of our Strategic Goals.

We will actively monitor and review progress for our strategic goals over the next ten years. We will track our progress using a clear and measurable implementation plan, using indicators of success and targets for the changes we aim to bring about.

The Caritas Australia Leadership Team and Board of Directors will review progress against our Measurement Indicators biannually to inform decision making in the organisation. We note that these measures were designed in 2021 within the context of that time and may need to be further refined during the period of this plan. We will share updates on progress with stakeholders in our Annual Report.



Those who work for Caritas must...  
dedicate themselves to others with  
heartfelt concern.

– Pope Benedict XVI,  
Deus Caritas Est, 31



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- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.
- United Nations, 2015. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: UN Publishing.
- World Bank. 2020. Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune. Washington, DC: World Bank

Angel and Angelo play at home before leaving for the local school which is close to their Manide community in Camarines Norte, Philippines.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.