



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

End poverty
Promote justice
Uphold dignity

COVID-19 restrictions no barrier to Caritas Australia's Project Compassion appeal

24 February 2021

Project Compassion, now in its 56th year, is one of Australia's longest running appeals. The iconic donation boxes have well and truly become a fixture in parishes and schools across the country during the 6 weeks of Lent.

COVID-19 restrictions have presented challenges to how we normally deliver Project Compassion to Australians, but schools and communities across the country are stepping up to support the appeal in new and creative ways.

Technology has also opened up a world of possibilities for schools to connect with the development programs that Project Compassion makes possible. This year, for the first time, supporters are able to connect directly with our overseas program staff via 'Virtual Immersions'.

Schools across the country have the opportunity to participate in 90 immersions, ranging from primary to senior secondary.

"The fact that students can talk directly to staff in Australia and overseas during COVID-19 is really special," says Bernard Holland, the Social & Ecological Justice Animators Manager at Caritas Australia.

"The immersions for schools have been a success, with some primary immersions involving up to 600 students from 20 schools on one call. Now, with technology, we can reach regional and remote schools that we couldn't before".

"This kind of insight into how our programs work, and what it really means to work alongside marginalised populations is a great opportunity for students to develop their understanding of what Lent really means".

Parishes are also able to enjoy the unique opportunity to connect with Caritas Australia staff through 75 minute 'Virtual Immersions', which include prayer, reflection and dialogue.

Parishioners can register for an evening session at lent.caritas.org.au/virtualimmersions

For supporters across the country, last week's celebrations of Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday looked a little different to previous years, but schools and parishes are forging ahead to raise funds for the appeal.

In Bendigo, the Caritas Australia Diocesan Coordinator for Sandhurst Diocese, Kerry Stone, has organised the popular Shrove Tuesday pancake event at Hargreaves Mall every year since 1999.

"Our pancake chefs [usually] produce over a thousand free pancakes and a variety of school choirs entertain the crowd," says Kerry. "It's a day when I feel so proud to be part of Caritas and to share our transformative message with the public".

This year, state-wide lockdowns meant that the event in Bendigo was cancelled, but the community is looking forward to supporting Project Compassion in a variety of ways once restrictions are lifted.

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

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To donate to Project Compassion, organise your own fundraiser or get more information visit lent.caritas.org.au or call 1800 024 413. Your generosity will help uplift the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society. Help us create a brighter future for those most in need today.

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Caritas Australia is a member of Caritas Internationalis, one of the world's largest humanitarian networks in the world with 162 agencies operating in 200 countries and territories.

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