

700+ Unite for Project Compassion Big Water Walk



More than 700 students and staff from 23 schools across Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) came together for Caritas Australia's Big Water Walk in support of Project Compassion.

Beginning at Parramatta Park, students carried buckets of water along a 4km route, gaining a glimpse of the daily journey faced by people in developing communities, especially women and children, in search of clean water.

"I feel tired," said St John's Primary Riverstone student Rachel Song. "Now I understand how people must feel after walking such long distances for water. We should be grateful for how easily we can get water."

"I feel like today was a day of reflection, and to come together in solidarity and to raise awareness of the difficulties people face trying to access clean water," added St Patrick's Primary Parramatta student Amelia Siva.



Adding to the significance of the day, Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv joined part of the walk, offering encouragement and sharing in the experience alongside students and staff.

"I know firsthand what it's like to have to walk long distances to fetch clean water," said Bishop Vincent. "When I fled Vietnam and was living in a refugee camp in Malaysia, we were all focused on how we would get clean water."

The journey took participants past local landmarks including Parramatta Leagues Club and CommBank Stadium. They were joined by CSPD Chief Executive Officer Jack de Groot for a prayer and reflection led by Deacon Adrian Gomez at St Patrick's Cathedral. The walk continued to Noller Bridge and the Boer War Memorial before looping back into Parramatta Park.

"It was moving to see so many of our students genuinely engaging with Project Compassion and its message of solidarity," said Mr de Groot. "From my time with Caritas Australia, I know the profound impact initiatives like this can have on communities experiencing poverty and hardship. This is faith in action - young people showing compassion and a real commitment to others."



Students approached the walk with energy and enthusiasm, aiming to better understand the daily reality faced by millions of people around the world. People like Sisilia, a 13-year-old from northern Tanzania. After her father passed away, she spent hours each day fetching water, often in unsafe conditions, leaving little time for school. With support from Caritas Australia's Project Compassion, clean water taps have been installed at her school and in her village, improving health and giving her time to learn. She's now a school leader and hopes to one day become a pilot.

"This event is a great example of young people coming together in faith and action," said the event's organiser, CSPD Mission Partner Ryan Reyes. "By carrying buckets of water, students get a real sense of the challenges people like Sisilia face every day. It deepens their understanding of human dignity and why it's important to look out for those most in need. It builds real compassion and helps them see the difference they can make."

"It's so easy to take safe, clean water for granted when we live in Australia," said Bishop Vincent. "So many people around the world must take a long daily journey to access what we get freely from our taps. When you carry a bucket of water, every step you take must be deliberate, otherwise the water spills. Your arms feel like lead, and your shoulders tighten and burn. The weight feels manageable at first but quickly becomes relentless. It's a heavy burden that few of us will ever experience."

In an atmosphere of positivity and shared purpose, students expressed their gratitude at how the experience deepened their understanding of global inequality.

"I learnt to empathise with other people's situations and that you need to walk in someone's shoes to really truly understand," said Marian Catholic College Kenthurst student Aleesha George.



In its second year, the Big Water Walk continues to be a powerful expression of Project Compassion in action - inviting students to live out the Gospel call to serve others with compassion, justice and generosity.

"We need to take more care of our water," said Marian Catholic College Kenthurst student Lucia Sorbello. "We take it for granted when others don't have it. So every time we take a shower or even drink water, let's be grateful because it's a blessing we have in our life."

Through the Big Water Walk, students and schools across the Diocese of Parramatta are raising awareness and directly supporting Caritas Australia's work with communities in need - a clear reflection of CSPD's mission to form young people who care for others and seek to make a difference.

[PHOTO GALLERY \(two folders containing a selection of 22 and 53 images\)](#)