



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

**Australian Bishops speak in support of Caritas annual fundraiser Project Compassion
Media Release
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The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) is calling on all Australians to show their solidarity with the poorest of the poor, as Caritas Australia today launches its annual appeal, Project Compassion.

Project Compassion is the largest aid and development fundraiser in Australia which has taken place during the season of Lent for the past forty years.

Funds raised through Project Compassion enable Caritas Australia to champion the human dignity and rights of all people as they map a route out of debilitating poverty.

In 2011 the theme of Project Compassion is "*Partner with us to make a difference*", a message that runs to the very core of Caritas Australia's mission as a Catholic agency for grass-roots development.

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Archbishop Philip Wilson urged Australians to support Caritas through this appeal.

"Caritas Australia gives expression to the Gospel imperative of pursuing justice and helping those suffering from poverty and disadvantage; Caritas, and the communities they support rely on the generosity of the Australian community", he said.

"Our faith in Jesus Christ leads us to follow in his example of compassion for the poor. The Australian Catholic Bishops wholeheartedly support this essential work of the Church that takes place through our International Aid and Development agency Caritas."

CEO of Caritas Australia Jack deGroot said that more than ever, communities living in extreme poverty rely on the solid, grassroots approach of Caritas.

"In the 2009-10 financial year, an additional 64 million people were plunged into poverty the world over. The international community is now less than five year away from the deadline to halve extreme poverty – as set out in the Millennium Development Goals", he said.

"Caritas is an institution which provides much hope for vulnerable communities. Last year, the generous support of Australians helped make PC its best yet at \$9.3 million. We hope see the same display of compassion this year to reach 10 million this year", he said.

In partnering with Caritas this Project Compassion, Australians have a unique opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to the poorest of the poor and to give selflessly in the name of social justice.

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