

# Caritas Australia Advocacy Agenda 2022 - 2026





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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.



# Foreword

## Why is Caritas Australia committed to advocacy?

Advocacy has been part of our story since the beginning. In scripture, it is inseparable from any encounter with the divine or the sacred. The story of liberation begins with Moses. Moses encounters God in the mystery of the burning bush. The outcome is a commission that frightened this poor shepherd. 'I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of slavery.' Moses complains that he has a speech impediment, that his brother Aaron would be more persuasive. God says that he knows the suffering of the people. Moses may feel inadequate. That doesn't get him off the hook. From this day forward, he will be an advocate, like it or not.

A list of all the advocates in scripture would fill many pages. Abraham advocates for the city of Sodom. The prophets all advocate for justice. John the Baptist advocates against tyranny. The Syrophenician woman advocates for her daughter. Martha advocates for her brother, Lazarus. Even when he is arrested, Jesus advocates 'let these others go'. He advocates on behalf of those who torture him: 'forgive them, Father'.

'Advocate' is a word that Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit. In Greek, the word is *parakletos*, meaning a person who pleads your case in a formal situation, such as a court or tribunal, so that you get justice. Our advocate, says Jesus, is 'the spirit of truth' which is found within us. It is not an add on, not an optional extra. Of course, the Spirit has many roles to play and our relationship with the Spirit is the story of our growth over an entire lifetime. Yet there is no doubt that Jesus understands that truth telling and speaking up on behalf of others is core business for the Spirit.

For Caritas Australia, advocacy is one area in which our four values - courage, partnership, stewardship and compassion - come together. It takes courage to address certain issues and compassion is often the source of that courage. Our advocacy is an expression of partnership. We don't presume to speak on behalf of people other than in the context of an authentic relationship with them. At the same time, advocacy is an expression of stewardship of the resources that have been entrusted to us: we use our resources of both mind and heart to foster greater wisdom and humility in the relationship of humans with creation. All our values are transformative. They invite us to help create a better world. They belong to a prophetic tradition. Advocacy is deeply ingrained in Caritas Australia.

In 2021, Caritas Australia consulted our partners, staff and Board members to understand their priorities, perspectives, strengths and challenges for advocacy. We were also informed by the views of our supporters and the wider Catholic community. Together, their voices were instrumental in shaping the development of this strategy, which will guide our advocacy over the next five years.



With gratitude,

*Kirsty Robertson*

Kirsty Robertson  
Chief Executive Officer



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

- Mother Teresa

Creating ripples: Rosalie, once forced to serve in the army, is now a role model for others in her community in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.





Arsad cultivates rice on his farm in Indonesia. He led a sanitation program in his community with the support of Caritas partner Laz Harfa. Now everyone in his hamlet has a latrine. Photo: Laz Harfa.

# Our Guiding Principles

From Caritas Australia's Strategic Direction, 2021-2031:

## 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.



Courage



Partnership



Stewardship



Compassion

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.

- From Caritas Australia's Strategic Direction, 2021-2031





Aboriginal Carbon Foundation ranger, Sarah Barkley, and elder John Clark, working to care for Country using traditional fire management practices. Photo: Aboriginal Carbon Foundation.

## How we define advocacy

**“Advocacy is one of the concrete ways of expressing the social dimension of proclaiming the “Good News”. At the heart of Advocacy are the poor, and the way of engaging them to challenge injustice and oppression and make changes happen. Advocacy is the process, based on evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision-makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions in defence and promotion of the common good and full enforcement of human rights.”**

**- Doing Advocacy - Guidelines for Caritas Internationalis Members, Caritas Internationalis**

For the purpose of this strategy, advocacy refers to the activities of Caritas Australia directed towards the goal of achieving long-term, sustainable policy and practice change through the strategic engagement directly or indirectly of decision-makers.

## Our Goal

Caritas Australia pursues change in policies, practices and attitudes in the Australian Government and society, so as to contribute to the common good and the enforcement of human rights of the people we serve, here in Australia, in our region and around the world.

This Goal is shaped around the Caritas Australia Strategic Direction and the Caritas Internationalis understanding of advocacy.





Caritas Australia's team in Port Moresby unloads a container of Personal Protective Equipment for distribution to health centres in Papua New Guinea to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Photo: Julius Nohu/Caritas Australia.

## Our Advocacy Principles

**We are credible:** We are informed by our experience and expertise, and the experience and expertise of partners. When we engage in advocacy, we are clear about our source of credibility and speak from that perspective.

**We are evidence-based:** Our policy solutions and our advocacy activities are evidence-based. This evidence may be drawn from our own work or from the work of others, and is grounded in what works in achieving the change we want to see.

**We are cooperative:** We will seek a cooperative approach to our engagement with decision-makers, partners and influencers. We will look for opportunities for shared outcomes and, if we disagree, do so respectfully.

**We amplify voices:** We will raise up the voices of partners and prioritise giving them an opportunity to speak directly to decision-makers. We will find the balance between our own voice as Caritas Australia and the voices of our partners.

**We are focused:** We recognise that advocacy is effective when it is focused on a small number of issues and sustained over an extended period. We will be known and credible for a few priority issues.

In our Advocacy research, we abide by the ACFID Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development, including appropriate risk management processes and the identification of potential harm to participants and others.

## Our Common Priorities

As part of the consultation process to develop this advocacy strategy, our partners, Board members and staff shared their diverse priorities, strategies and experiences. From this four priorities emerged around which we want to organise our common advocacy. In discerning these priorities, we considered the following criteria:

- a. Alignment to the Caritas Australia Strategic Direction
- b. Achievable through a credible theory of change
- c. Feasible with the resources likely to be available
- d. Informed by the voices of our partners

Out of this discernment the following four priorities emerged:

**A stronger Australian aid program for the most marginalised**

**Ecological justice and responding to climate change**

**The wellbeing, participation and leadership of women**

**Justice for First Australians**



# A stronger Australian aid program for the most marginalised



I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least.

- Dorothy Day, Catholic social justice activist and journalist



Oliva teaches adults from her community inside her home in Tanzania. Photo: August Lucky

## Our focus:

We will promote an Australian aid program that:

- Focuses on poverty alleviation, prioritises the most marginalised and reaches more people through long-term, sustained growth
- Adopts stronger measures to support locally-led decision-making and capacity to address development and humanitarian issues
- Provides increased, sustained support for COVID-19 response and recovery.

We believe that Australia's aid program will be most impactful and effective when Australia's engagement is founded on two principles:

- Putting the rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised people at the centre of our engagement. Australia's aid program should focus on ensuring that vulnerable communities and groups are protected and key drivers of marginalisation addressed to achieve inclusive and dignified development and humanitarian response.
- Localisation, which means that local communities and organisations are supported and empowered, as partners in a reciprocal relationship, to lead their own development. It is the practical expression of subsidiarity, the principle that decisions should be made by the people closest to and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community. Localisation is a priority for our partners and is embedded through Caritas Australia's Strategic Direction and Program strategies. It is also a priority for our advocacy allies: Caritas Oceania, Caritas Internationalis and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

The Australian Government has cut Australian aid successively over the past six years and it is currently a third lower in real terms than it was in 2015. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted global poverty and human development. It has amplified existing socioeconomic inequalities across the world including access to health services, education and livelihoods as well as marginalisation due to gender, disability and climate change vulnerability. We will advocate for a commitment to grow the aid budget and for more support to help our regional neighbours respond urgently to the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19.

To maximise our impact, the principal modality of our advocacy on these areas will be through our contribution to collective advocacy initiatives under the umbrellas of our coalition partners including Micah Australia, ACFID and the Church Agencies Network.

**“A church that doesn't provoke any crises, a gospel that doesn't unsettle, a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin, a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the society in which it is being proclaimed— what gospel is that?”**

- Saint Oscar Romero



# Ecological justice and responding to climate change



I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.

- Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

Aloma next to mangroves grown and planted by her community to protect their coastline from storm surges and erosion, as part of a conservation and disaster risk reduction program.  
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

## Our focus:

- Join our partners in calling for Australia to adopt effective targets and credible plans for reducing emissions in line with the Paris Agreement
- Promote increased investment in resilience and adaptation which prioritises the voices and needs of local communities and reduces climate-induced displacement
- Ensure local communities have an informed and effective voice in decision-making around extractive industries that affect their livelihoods, societies and environment.

Caritas Australia's partners and the communities they serve have first-hand experience of the consequences of climate change, which is impacting the most marginalised people the hardest. Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time and is undermining hard-won development gains. The World Bank warns that unchecked, climate change could push up to 132 million people into extreme poverty over the next 10 years.<sup>1</sup> The World Food Program predicts that in a world that is 2°C warmer, an additional 189 million people will go to bed hungry.<sup>2</sup>

Almost every partner we consulted in the Pacific, Asia and Africa nominated *Laudato Si'* (the papal encyclical on climate and the environment), climate and/or environment as a priority, and our Pacific partners and two of our First Australian Program partners specifically asked Caritas Australia to advocate on climate change. From our partners, there was a clear, ongoing call for countries like Australia to increase our ambition in reducing emissions to tackle the root causes of climate change.

Many of our partners support communities to build resilience to disasters. For them, disaster preparedness and responding to extreme weather is now synonymous with climate change adaptation. There was a widespread call from our partners for greater investment in climate change adaptation funding that is available to local communities.

Many of our international partners identified a range of extractive industries which are creating economic, social and environmental issues for local communities. This includes our partners in Oceania, Asia and Africa, who for years have been advocating for just land agreements and practices by extractive industries to achieve fairer outcomes for local communities. Lack of free, prior and informed consent by local communities is often at the heart of the issue.

In advocating on these issues, we are also responding to the call from Catholic Church leaders to act on ecological justice, including Pope Francis, the Federation of Catholics Bishops Conferences of Oceania, Cardinal Soane Mafi (President of Caritas Oceania) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

The principal modalities of our advocacy on these issues will be to lead the development of our own advocacy positions and campaigns, as well as advocacy in collaboration with Caritas Oceania, Caritas Internationalis, Micah Australia and others.

**“We want those big nations to really see and to really hear. Not to pretend. Not to turn away. We want them not to be deafened to the cry of reality by other agendas. Can they turn an ear of love, not of political expediency? Are they prepared to hear the voice of the voiceless?”**

- Cardinal Soane Mafi, Bishop of Tonga and Niue, and President of Caritas Oceania<sup>3</sup>



# The wellbeing, participation and leadership of women



Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.

- Catherine of Siena

Margret teaches sign language and life skills, like sewing, cooking, nutrition, hygiene and hospitality to teen and adult students at the San Isidro Care Centre vocational school for deaf and mute students in the Solomon Islands. Photo: Neil Nuia

## Our focus:

We will strengthen the Australian aid program's work on the:

- Prevention and response to gender-based violence
- Promotion of leadership and participation of women in decision-making forums
- Protection, participation and leadership of women in humanitarian contexts.

Globally, women are disproportionately affected by poverty, food insecurity, climate change, gender-based violence and abuse. Women and girls are also more vulnerable and exposed to risk during disasters, such as cyclones, tsunamis and disease outbreaks. In many regions, women and girls face additional barriers to accessing education, employment and opportunities to participate in decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

Caritas Australia works to promote the equal and inherent dignity and rights of women and their invaluable role in society. Our Strategic Direction 2021-2023 highlights the importance of women having equitable and adequate access to basic services, being safe at home and in the community including during times of conflict and disaster, and being able to participate in decision-making and lead their own development.

Empowering women also means good development outcomes. For example, when women are empowered, their children are more likely to attend school and have better health outcomes.

From our partners, the prevention of and response to gender-based violence was particularly identified in fragile, conflict-affected humanitarian contexts as well as in the Pacific.

The participation and leadership of women is also a common theme across many contexts, particularly in the Pacific. One of Caritas Oceania's key strategic goals is to increase the participation and influence of women in both community and regional initiatives, and enable their voices to influence decision making at local, regional and international levels.

The final sub-priority is the protection, participation and leadership of women in humanitarian contexts. Evidence shows that when women are included in decision-making, disaster preparedness and response initiatives as well as peacebuilding efforts are more likely to be durable and effective.<sup>5</sup>

The principal modalities of our advocacy on these issues will be to lead the development of our own advocacy positions and campaigns, as well as advocacy in collaboration with Caritas Oceania and others.

**“The world doesn't need what women have; it needs what women are.”**

**- Saint Edith Stein**



# Justice for First Australians



Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, with Caritas Australia, supports survivors of the State-run Kinchela Boys Home in Kempsey, NSW. Photo: Caritas Australia



Self-determination, pride and self-respect are the banks of the river through which the waters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life flows.

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, 2016



## Our focus:

- Promote truth and voice for First Australians:
  - a. Support the inclusion of honest and truthful history of Australia and its relationship to First Australians throughout the education system
  - b. Support local, grassroots, First Australians-led organisations to have a strong and effective voice in shaping policy that impacts the lives of their communities
- Reduce the over-representation of First Australians in the juvenile justice and child protection reform systems
- Promote ecological justice through recognising traditional knowledge and practices in caring for Country.

These priorities were developed through a collective process with Caritas Australia's First Australians Programs partners, with the intention that Caritas Australia will support our partners to pursue these priorities collectively or individually.

The first sub-priority is focused on the truth of Australia's history and the need for First Australians to have a stronger voice in policy making impacting their lives. The focus on truth is particularly on the education system with a generational goal of growing knowledge and understanding of First Australians' experience.

The focus on voice is particularly aimed at federal government policy-making processes. Despite many attempts by government, local communities often experience policy as being imposed rather than co-designed. However, in other cases some First Australians partners have strong examples of influential roles in policy making.

The second sub-priority around juvenile justice and child protection was another high priority which emerged from the consultations. This is a complex inter-relationship of policy issues and levels of government. Caritas Australia believes it could play a role in advocacy to the federal government.

The final sub-priority, promoting ecological justice through recognising traditional knowledge and practices in caring for Country, links closely to the first priority in this strategy (ecological justice and responding to climate change), particularly the sub-priority on increased investment in resilience and adaptation.

Further detail on the implementation of this advocacy priority is outlined in the First Australians Program Advocacy Strategy.

**"I believe if the problem lies in the community so too does the answer. If you train up local people, who better than to be delivering this than those that come from there or are living there."**

- Uncle Tom Powell, Founder, Red Dust Healing



# Caritas Australia Advocacy Framework 2022-2026

## From our Strategic Direction 2021-2031

### Vision

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

### 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

| Courage | Partnership | Stewardship | Compassion |

## Advocacy Goal

Caritas Australia pursues change in policies, practices and attitudes in the Australian Government and society, so as to contribute to the common good and the enforcement of human rights of the people we serve, here in Australia, in our region and around the world.

## Advocacy Principles

| We are credible | We are evidence-based | We are co-operative |  
| We amplify voices | We are focused |

## Advocacy Priorities

### A stronger Australian aid program for the most marginalised

Promote an Australian aid program that:

- Focuses on poverty alleviation, prioritises the most marginalised and reaches more people through long-term, sustained growth
- Adopts stronger measures to support locally-led decision-making, capacity and resilience to address development and humanitarian issues
- Provides increased, sustained support for COVID-19 response and recovery.

### Ecological justice and responding to climate change

- Join our partners in calling for Australia to adopt effective targets and credible plans for reducing emissions in line with the Paris Agreement
- Promote increased investment in resilience and adaptation which prioritises the voices and needs of local communities and reduces climate-induced displacement
- Ensure local communities have an informed and effective voice in decision-making around extractive industries that affect their economies, societies and environment.

### The wellbeing, participation and leadership of women

Strengthen the Australian aid program's work on the:

- Prevention and response to gender-based violence
- Promotion of leadership and participation of women in decision-making forums
- Protection, participation and leadership of women in humanitarian contexts.

### Justice for First Australians

- Promote truth and voice for First Australians:
  - a. Support the inclusion of honest and truthful history of Australia and its relationship to First Australians throughout the education system
  - b. Support local, grassroots, First Australians-led organisations to have a strong and effective voice in shaping policy that impacts the lives of their communities.
- Reduce the over-representation of First Australians in the juvenile justice and child protection reform systems
- Promote ecological justice through recognising traditional knowledge and practices in caring for Country.

## Primary Modalities

Advocacy in coalition

Lead on developing advocacy positions and campaigns; advocacy in coalition

Lead on developing advocacy positions and campaigns; advocacy in coalition

Advocacy in coalition; lead on developing advocacy positions and campaigns; support partner initiatives.



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The parable [of the Good Samaritan] clearly does not indulge in abstract moralizing, nor is its message merely social and ethical. It speaks to us of an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity: we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love. We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering. That is the meaning of dignity.

- Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*



Caritas Lebanon youth volunteers in action after the 2020 Beirut blast. Photo: Caritas Lebanon.







End poverty  
Promote justice  
Uphold dignity

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