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Media Release

Project Compassion: Australia's Challenge

This week marks the end of Caritas Australia's Project Compassion appeal, and the last opportunity for Australians to help raise a mammoth \$10 million in aid of the world's most vulnerable communities.

Over the past five weeks, millions of people across Australia have participated in the nation's largest aid and development fundraiser – Project Compassion – standing in steadfast solidarity with those who bear the greatest burden of global poverty. With one week left in the annual Lenten appeal, Caritas Australia is hoping for a record final tally.

Caritas Australia's CEO, Jack de Groot, said: "As we enter Holy Week and prepare to celebrate Easter with family and friends, we are called to remember our own humility and reaffirm our commitment to one-another in the name of new life, new hope and new beginnings.

"This year, millions of Australians have embraced the Lenten spirit and humbly reached out to the most vulnerable communities in the furthest corners of the Earth. In this final week of our Project Compassion campaign, it's time to turn our sights back home."

Caritas Australia is part of the world's second largest aid and development network, working in over 200 countries and territories to help communities to tackle the structures of poverty and take control of their future. With a commitment to stand by the poorest of the poor, Caritas Australia supports long-term development throughout Indigenous Australia.

Since 2006 Caritas Australia has supported the Aboriginal Catholic Social Services (ACSS), a community centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Sydney. The centre is open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, regardless of denomination.

"ACCS offers a holistic service including vocational training, employment skills and activities that nurture spiritual and cultural well-being – these are vital steps towards closing the gap between the health and education of Aboriginal people and the wider Australian community," says Mr de Groot.

One ACCS member, Judy says: "Since joining ACSS I have more confidence and a stronger identity. I am healing. I've been helped to establish my Aboriginal heritage/ancestry is Murrawarri and feel I have gained a healthier value of myself and an understanding of my feelings and where they come from. It has given me a great deal of respect for my Aboriginal people.

"I hope that the gap between Aboriginal people and the wider community closes - that our youth have greater resources to overcome barriers that obstruct their education, which could lead to lower incarceration rates, better health and longevity."

*Donations can be made to **Project Compassion** by phoning 1800 024 413, on-line at www.caritas.org.au or by posting your cheque to GPO Box 9830, Sydney NSW 2001 (Please include your personal details, including your parish name and diocese). For enquiries please contact: Catherine Stace – catherine.stace@mn.catholic.org.au.*