

# DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN POLICY

Last updated 11 July 2025

## Key Points

We work to support those most vulnerable to extreme poverty and marginalisation.

We operate through long-term development programs and humanitarian programs.

We work with partners to strengthen local capacity and achieve sustainable outcomes.

## 1. Why this policy exists

Caritas Australia works through the principles of Catholic Social Teachings and our practices are underpinned by an Integral Human Development approach. We support those most vulnerable to extreme poverty and marginalisation build a life with dignity and help themselves out of poverty, hunger and injustice in a sustainable way. Caritas Australia also works to bring relief and aid to people whose lives have been devastated by natural disaster or conflict. Integral to undertaking these key activities of aid and development, Caritas Australia works within Australia to engage people in education, advocacy and action for those vulnerable to experiencing poverty and marginalisation.

The purpose of this policy is to guide organisational and programmatic decision-making, including but not limited to the identification of investment priorities, who we partner with, and discerning which programs and projects to support and where.

This policy documents Caritas Australia's commitments around:

- Principles and overarching approach that guides Caritas Australia's development and humanitarian work
- Inclusion and empowerment
- Development and non-development (welfare, religious and political) activities
- Partnership, accompaniment and Locally Led Development
- Capacity Strengthening and Organisational Development
- Sustainability
- Development practice

## 2. This policy applies to

This Development and Humanitarian Policy applies to all Caritas Australia supported development and humanitarian programs and partnerships in Australia and internationally. It should be read and understood by all Caritas Australia personnel, partners and other stakeholders whose work involves decision-making about programs.

## 3. Definitions used in this policy

Please see appendix 1 for a full list of definitions that are used in this policy.

## **4. Guiding Principles**

Caritas Australia's programs, projects and partnerships are guided by Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which are consistent with the principles and practice of community development and partnership commonly adopted by many non-government development and humanitarian organisations.

The following Catholic Social Teaching principles are intrinsic to all programs, projects and partnerships of Caritas Australia:

### **4.1 Dignity of the Human Person**

Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has inherent dignity. Authentic development is to promote the dignity of the human person and the common good, centred on empowering people, holistic in nature, with the dignity of the person paramount.

### **4.2 Subsidiarity and Participation**

All people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by the people closest to and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.

### **4.3 The Common Good**

All people should have sufficient access to the goods and resources of society so that they can completely and easily live fulfilling lives. The rights of the individual to personal possessions and community resources must be balanced with the needs of the disadvantaged and dispossessed. The common good is reached when we work together to improve the wellbeing of people in our society and the wider world.

### **4.4 Solidarity**

Everyone belongs to one human family, regardless of their nationality, religious, ethnic, economic, political and ideological differences. Everyone has an obligation to promote the rights and development of all peoples across communities, nations and the world, irrespective of national boundaries. Caritas Australia expresses solidarity by reaching out to those who are most marginalised, and by committing to sustainability and long-term engagement, including with the Australian community.

### **4.5 Preferential Option for the Poor**

Caring for those most vulnerable to extreme poverty and injustice is everyone's responsibility. Caritas Australia programs and projects will show preferential care for people most vulnerable and marginalised and ensure that the practice of subsidiarity leads to initiatives coming from the people themselves.

### **4.6 Economic Justice**

Economic life is not meant solely for profit, but rather in service of the entire human community. Everyone capable should be involved in economic activity and should be able to draw from work, the means for providing for themselves and their family.

### **4.7 Care for our Common Home**

The earth and all life on it are part of God's creation. Caritas Australia takes both an ecological and social approach by respecting, sustaining and protecting the earth and one another. Caritas Australia programs and projects promote stewardship of creation by being conscious caretakers of the environment and earth's resources.

### **4.8 Promotion of Peace**

All peace requires respect for and the development of human life, which in turn involves the safeguarding of the dignity, freedom and goods of people. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right relationships among human beings. Caritas Australia's programs and projects will promote peace, justice, collaboration and respect for people's differences.

## 5. Policy Commitments

### 5.1 Rooted in Catholic Social Teachings, Integral Human Development (IHD) informs Caritas Australia's development and humanitarian strategic priorities and humanitarian principles.

5.1.1 Integral Human Development forms a central component of Caritas Australia's organisational strategy and underpins the work that Caritas Australia does with its partners. It is founded in Catholic Social Teachings and is a holistic and multi-dimensional human development concept (integrating social, economic, political, cultural, personal and spiritual aspects of life) that provides the overarching development approach for Caritas Australia's humanitarian and development work.

5.1.2 Caritas Australia commits to putting people most vulnerable to experiencing extreme poverty and marginalisation at the centre of our development and humanitarian work, protected and empowered through Caritas Australia -supported long-term and humanitarian programs.

5.1.3 Caritas Australia will invest in two types of programming, development and humanitarian, which are distinct from each other but intrinsically linked.

5.1.4 Through our humanitarian programs and projects Caritas Australia will provide immediate relief, recovery and rehabilitation in response to disasters and/or conflict.

5.1.5 Through our development programs and projects Caritas Australia will provide long-term partnership and support to communities that experience disaster, climate impacts, poverty, injustice, hunger and oppression by facilitating the promotion of human dignity, human rights and the common good.

5.1.6 Caritas Australia recognises that long-term development, humanitarian response and advocacy are intrinsically linked and need to be integrated and closely coordinated to effectively serve people most vulnerable to experiencing extreme poverty and marginalisation.

5.1.7 Caritas Australia is committed to climate justice, recognising the climate crisis as a major moral and ecological challenge that drives poverty and inequality. We integrate climate action across our programs, combining emerging practices with traditional and indigenous knowledge. Our development work strives to build resilience, supporting sustainable livelihoods, and addressing climate vulnerability through GEDSI-transformative and locally led adaptation that empowers communities in the long term. In our humanitarian efforts, we prioritise early and anticipatory action, helping communities recover and rebuild stronger.

5.1.8 Our programs and projects place special attention on the coordination of resources, planning and action across agencies to promote the common good. This includes but is not limited to reinforcement of links with established international processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant frameworks.

5.1.9 Caritas Australia will give strong attention to environmental stewardship, caring for the earth and its resources and by ensuring programs and projects are environmentally sound.

5.1.10 Caritas Australia programming will align with, and work towards the outcomes stated in the Strategic Directions and other documentation.

## **5.2 Caritas Australia invests in development activities; we do not invest in non-development activities**

5.2.1 Caritas Australia will ensure that humanitarian and development programs and projects are informed by clear social, political and cultural analyses and a good understanding of how change takes place in a particular context. Investment of funding and resources into Caritas Australia programming works towards development priorities and objectives.

5.2.2 Caritas Australia will ensure that our funds and resources are provided on a non-discriminatory basis. The acceptance of specific religious or political beliefs or membership in a particular religious or political group is not a condition for receiving assistance or participating in Caritas Australia programs and projects.

5.2.3 Caritas Australia commits to ensuring that funds and other resources designated for the purpose of aid and development are used only for those purposes, and not for:

- Political activities: Caritas Australia is non-partisan and will not use funds to support projects that promote or engage in party-political activities or support party-political individuals or groups.
- Religious activities: Caritas Australia funds are not to be used for development or humanitarian programming that is designed to:
  - Promote a particular religion or attempt to convert people from one religious faith or denomination to another. This is in accordance with Australian Catholic Bishops Conference mandate and Canon Law ("No one is ever permitted to coerce persons to embrace the Catholic faith against their conscience<sup>1</sup>") and a reflection of Benedict XVI's first encyclical "Charity, furthermore, cannot be used as a means of engaging in what is nowadays considered proselytism. Love is free; it is not practised as a way of achieving other ends... Those who practise charity in the Church's name will never seek to impose the Church's faith upon others.<sup>2</sup>"
  - Build up church or religious infrastructure, training or organisational activities except in circumstances where they are specifically designed to provide non-denominational development outcomes.
- Welfare activities: Whilst Caritas Australia is always concerned with human welfare, in line with our Integral Human Development approach, we will not fund activities which create dependence on longer-term care and maintenance (welfare activities). Caritas Australia is committed to ensuring that people and organisations are never treated as passive recipients of aid but actively engaged and empowered to implement and manage their own development agenda.

5.2.4 Caritas Australia will ensure that, if any element of a program or project design could potentially be viewed or categorised as non-development: see definitions table in appendix 1.

- Caritas Australia personnel will closely review, analyse, plan and monitor program and project components to ensure compliance with this policy throughout the program or project lifetime.
- If any components could be represented as non-development activity these will be managed, reported and accounted for separately to aid and development components.

5.2.5 Caritas Australia will ensure that our partners:

- Understand and can differentiate between development and non-development activities

<sup>1</sup> [CAN. 748§2](#)

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est no. 31.c. (God is Love), 2005, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

- Understand obligations regarding the use of Caritas Australia funds designated for development and humanitarian purposes.

### **5.3 Caritas Australia commits to the inclusion, participation and empowerment of those who are vulnerable and those who are affected by the intersecting drivers of marginalisation and exclusion.**

Encompassing the development and humanitarian imperatives and moral obligation to uphold human dignity is the protection of human rights. In line with our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and our Safeguarding Policy, we make the following commitments:

#### **5.3.1 Our development and humanitarian programs and projects will:**

- Contribute to the realisation of human rights
- Focus on including, protecting and empowering those most underrepresented, marginalised and vulnerable to poverty and all forms of injustice
- Be delivered without distinction to race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class or socio-economic status.
- Be proactive in regard to anti-racism and addressing power imbalances in communities that we serve. In project designs we enquire about power relationships in each context.

5.3.2 In all our activities, and in collaboration with our partners, we are committed to the principle of do no harm. We do this through a focus on protection mainstreaming as outlined in our safeguarding policies (Child Protection Policy and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy).

5.3.3 We recognise that vulnerability and marginalisation vary in each context, so we will support partners and communities in analysing local context to identify and reach the most vulnerable and marginalised.

5.3.4 Caritas Australia's programs and projects will promote inclusive livelihood development strategies to ensure that those on the margins enhance and sustain their well-being and resilience with a view to enhancing economic justice.

5.3.5 Caritas Australia's programs and projects will promote peace, justice, collaboration and respect for people's differences. All programs and projects will be conflict-sensitive to promote communal harmony, and they will endeavour to establish a peaceful, democratic and just society.

5.3.6 Caritas Australia will work with local partners and communities to enable the most vulnerable and marginalised to participate in decisions affecting their lives and become architects of their own development, eventually rising out of poverty.

### **5.4 Caritas Australia builds and maintains long-term, strong, collaborative partnerships**

Partnership is a core function of Caritas Australia, which is informed by the Caritas Australia's Partnership Framework. Through effective partnerships in humanitarian relief and development and by transforming hearts and minds in the Australian community, Caritas Australia strives to end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity. Caritas Australia is committed to locally led development, and this is the practical form of our solidarity and is evidence of a mutuality of interests, especially acknowledging power imbalances in partnerships.

5.4.1 Caritas Australia is committed to building and maintaining partnerships that address vulnerabilities, increase resilience, uphold dignity and improve the safety and protection of people most vulnerable to injustice, extreme poverty and marginalisation. Caritas Australia recognises that local actors are best placed to understand and respond to the priorities of their communities and as such only work through partners.

5.4.2 Caritas Australia is committed to working alongside local partners and at-risk communities to address the root causes of poverty, inequality and marginalisation, prepare for and respond to disasters, and to achieve sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

5.4.3 In our relationships with partners we have principles that include Dignity of the Human Person, Subsidiarity and Participation, Solidarity, Mutual respect & collaboration, Equity & Inclusion, Autonomy & Sustainability, Accountability and Stewardship. The relationship between Caritas Australia and partners is one that will vary according to the needs and objectives of both organisations. To enhance this work, Caritas Australia has comprehensive feedback and complaints mechanisms and partner surveys so that partner feedback can be given and listened to. Caritas Australia also adheres to the Modus Operandi that has been developed and approved by Caritas Internationalis in 2025.

5.4.4 We will strengthen our partners and partnerships through accompaniment. Accompaniment enables partner organisations to realise their institutional development and capacity strengthening. This process is mutually enriching, intentional and strategic with clear and agreed upon outcomes and associated indicators that can be measured throughout the partnership.

## **5.5 Caritas Australia invests in strengthening our partners**

Autonomy, Accountability, Impact, Collaboration, and Sustainability. Caritas Australia promotes communities and individuals existing assets and strengths and invests in their growing capacity

5.5.1 Caritas Australia recognises that sustainability and local capacity are inherently linked. Therefore, Caritas Australia promotes local ownership, capacity strengthening and empowerment to achieve sustainable development outcomes and avoid creating aid dependency.

5.5.2 Our approach to strengthening capacity is based on partnership and the Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity, which requires that those most affected by the issue lead the response to it. Capacity strengthening activities that we support will:

- Be inclusive and use participatory approaches throughout all stages
- Be owned and driven by the local partner and/or community
- Recognise and build upon local knowledge, skills and assets
- Be designed and implemented in a sensitive and culturally relevant manner and consider local capacity, which may be able to support the activity
- Be adequately resourced to ensure that they reach the most vulnerable to poverty and marginalisation
- Be sensitive to the existing environment, opportunities and constraints
- Seek to promote localisation and work toward reducing or removing the need for Caritas Australia support.

5.5.3 In both our humanitarian and development work, we will work collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders to build capacity by:

- Ensuring all development activities supported by Caritas Australia give strong attention to capacity strengthening and empowerment of civil societies, communities and project participants
- Supporting organisational development by developing skills, abilities, systems and resources of local partners to enable operation at full potential and bring about sustainable change for the people being served.



## **5.6 Caritas Australia invests in sustainable development**

Caritas Australia recognises for development to be sustainable it must create an environment that supports a truly integral approach to the development of the human person. It must value and build on local resources, encourage full participation, promote local ownership and strengthen the capacity of participants to manage their own development.

Caritas Australia commits to:

5.6.1 Recognising that sustainable development requires long-term commitment. Significant time and resources are required to support partners, marginalised communities, local government and other stakeholders reach a strong position to continue the development process and benefits in the long-term, with limited or no external assistance.

5.6.2 Designing our humanitarian interventions to enhance the capacity of disaster-affected communities to sustain the outcomes of the initiative, and to recover their livelihoods and assets as quickly as possible.

5.6.3 Maintaining effective and efficient stewardship of all resources involved in our work throughout all stages of our programs and projects to promote sustainability (whether they are human, material, financial; acquired locally or from afar).

5.6.4 Designing our development and humanitarian work to promote environmental sustainability, manage climate risk and deliver improved environmental outcomes.

5.6.5 Building pathways for solidarity and sustainability by engaging the Australian community in advocacy, education and delivering programs and projects.

## **5.7 Caritas Australia strives to remain relevant and effective as an entity serving the most marginalised by:**

5.7.1 Operating in a manner consistent with current good practice guidelines

5.7.2 Ensuring programs and projects are informed by evidence, planning, assessments and learning

5.7.3 Investing in quality assessment of our development and humanitarian work, assessing results and effectiveness and reflect on findings and lessons to inform and improve practice.

## **5.8 Accessing and communicating this policy**

5.8.1 This policy will be available on our intranet and website and shared with relevant personnel.

5.8.2 Caritas Australia will ensure that relevant personnel understand that they are required to follow this policy.

## **5.9 Reviewing this policy**

5.9.1 We are committed to continuously improving our policies, procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed at a minimum every three years to ensure it is practical. We will update it if there are changes in legislation or circumstances.

5.9.2 We openly encourage feedback on this and other policies. Along with good practice from our sector, we will use this feedback to strengthen our policies and procedures.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

At Caritas Australia, a culture of effective development and humanitarian policy starts with strong leadership.

### 6.1 The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Guiding governance and culture of Caritas Australia through strategic leadership
- Ultimate accountability for our organisational policies
- Guiding the governance and culture of Caritas Australia through strategic leadership
- Approving this policy and holding the Leadership Team accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented

### 6.2 Leadership Team members are responsible for:

- Ensuring the integrity of the Development and Humanitarian Policy is aligned with the mission and values of Caritas Australia as well as compliance with relevant legal requirements
- Demonstrating a commitment to a culture of development and humanitarian and leading by example
- Ensuring our procedures, practices, plans and operations align with this policy
- Reporting to the Board via the CEO on policy matters
- Ensuring their team are aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities
- Monitoring and responding to any matter that is assigned to them to investigate

### 6.3 Leadership Team, Leader Group, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring all personnel under their responsibility are informed of the existence and contents of this policy and that workers clearly understand and comply with them
- Ensuring all partners/stakeholders under their responsibility are informed that this policy exists; and that those partners/stakeholders clearly understand and are able to comply with them
- Ensuring all procedures, practices, plans and operations and all programs and projects supported by CA are in line with and compliant with the policy
- Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of and compliance with the policy

### 6.4 Personnel (including you) are responsible for:

- Asking for clarification so that they understand this policy
- Ensuring the work that we do reflects the Guiding Principles and Policy Commitments stated above. We have a shared responsibility to ensure a culture of protecting privacy is at the forefront of all decisions and interactions of our work.

We have a shared responsibility to ensure development, humanitarian and locally led principles are at the forefront of our work.



## 7. Related Documents

This policy supports Caritas Australia's compliance with the following:

### 7.1 Legislation:

- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

### 7.2 Standards:

- Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct (2024) and Quality Assurance Framework
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade accreditation criteria and Australian Humanitarian Partnership standards and risk framework
- Caritas Internationalis Management Standards and Caritas Internationalis Emergency Guidelines Toolkit
- Core Humanitarian Standards
- Sphere Standards
- Australian Catholic Bishops Conference or relevant trustee (Australian Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church)

### 7.3 Caritas Australia governance documents:

- Caritas Australia Code of Conduct
- Caritas Australia Strategic Directions
- Caritas Australia Operational Plan
- Caritas Australia Impact Framework
- Caritas Australia Partnership Framework
- Caritas Australia Programs Playbook
- Development and Humanitarian Guidelines
- All other Caritas Australia International Programs policies and guidelines

## 8. Appendix List

- Appendix 1 - Definitions

## 9. Information about this policy

Can be accessed by	Anyone via website
Can be shared with	Internally and externally (including with other organisations)
Distributed to	All CA personnel, partners and other stakeholders whose work involves decision-making about programs
Document Owner	Programs Director
Approved by	Board of Directors
Commencement Date	01 Oct 2020
Next Review Date	25 July 2028
Document number	DH-DH-POL-v3.2

### How this policy has changed over time

Version	Approval Date	Summary of changes
v1.0	April 2010	Combined the two policies, Development and Humanitarian into one
v2.0	30 Oct 2015	Update to reflect CA's new vision, mission and strategy in accordance with the new CA policy framework
v3.0	22 Sep 2020	Incorporated Environmental Policy, capacity building policy and added commitments regarding development and non-development activities from the guidelines to this policy
v3.1	18 Nov 2020	Put in new format
V3.2	11 July 2025	Revised and updated to align with commitments outlined in the partnership framework on locally led development and partnership. Included new clauses anti racism (5.3.1) and climate justice (5.1.7)

## Appendix 1: Definitions

When we use ...	we mean ...
Accompaniment	Accompaniment is how partnerships are put into practice in both development and humanitarian contexts. Accompaniment is a mutual process of walking side-by-side with partners towards common aims. Capability sharing and organisational development are core to Caritas Australia's accompaniment approach: the mutual sharing of skills, knowledge and resources for strengthening both Caritas Australia and our partners. This process is mutually enriching, intentional and strategic, with clear and agreed-upon outcomes and associated indicators that can be measured throughout the partnership.
Capacity strengthening	For Caritas Australia, capacity strengthening is a deliberate process through which individuals, groups, organisations or networks enhance existing or develop new, knowledge, skills, attitudes, systems and structures needed to function effectively, efficiently and sustainably, to achieve development goals. We believe this approach to programming increases the ability of people, organisations and systems to cope with crises and to contribute long-term to the elimination of poverty.
development programs	The provision of long-term support by working in partnership with communities that experience poverty, injustice, hunger and oppression and facilitating the promotion of human dignity, human rights and common good. Development programs do not include welfare, partisan political or religious activities (see 5.2).
humanitarian programs	The provision of immediate relief, recovery and rehabilitation in response to suffering caused by disasters and/or conflicts, as well as action to prevent and prepare for them.
Locally Led Development	Recognises, respects, and strengthens the leadership and decision-making of local actors who are best placed to understand and respond to the needs of their communities
Localisation	Localisation is an "outcome of our partnership approach" that shifts relationships and power from international actors such as Caritas Australia to local organisations, Church partners and communities reflecting the principle of subsidiarity and solidarity. The localisation agenda allows Caritas Australia to renew and improve existing commitments to partnership and continue to reflect on how we are upholding our commitment to subsidiarity.
Non-Development Activities	Non-development activities as those that do not align with the objectives of aid and development and therefore must be clearly separated from development activities in programming, reporting, and funding. This includes Religious Activities, political activities and welfare activities.
Partnership	Partnership is a collaborative working relationship between two or more entities to pursue common goals, objectives, and are often built on aligned values. Within partnerships, risks and benefits are shared. Caritas Australia's understanding of partnership is informed by Caritas Internationalis Partnerships Principles. Through effective partnerships in humanitarian relief and development, Caritas Australia demonstrates the practical form of our solidarity. Caritas Australia has values-driven partnerships that strive to strengthen our partnerships with local organisations and Church partners, to strengthen their capacity to contribute to lasting and meaningful social change.
Political activities	Political activities are those that are associated with facilitating or supporting a specific political party or a candidate or organisation affiliated with a political party. This does not include advocacy which

	is aimed at persuading and influencing decision makers and opinion leaders irrespective of their political stance, on areas of policy related to programmatic expertise.
Program	A program is a set of strategically aligned, mutually reinforcing interventions that are managed and coordinated as one package with the objective of achieving outcomes and benefits in line with the organisation's strategic objectives. Programs are the umbrella under which projects operate. A program aligns and connects various projects through a combined goal, shared impact, joint planning and common set of indicators and measures.
Project	A project is a set of related activities with a well-defined target group, time-period, and budget, aiming to achieve a set of outputs or outcomes within its duration. Projects are temporary endeavours and finish upon completion of the work they were designed to deliver. Projects are usually relatively shorter and more limited in scope than programs.
Religious activities	Religious activities are defined as supporting or promoting a particular religion, including activities undertaken with the intention of converting individuals or groups from one faith and/or denomination to another.
Sustainability	The ability to continue into the long-term with reduced or without additional assistance. This can include sustainability with purely local resources or, for highly vulnerable populations, with a lesser level of external assistance and increasing levels of self-reliance over time. DFAT has defined sustainability as the continuation of benefits after major assistance from a donor has been completed.
Welfare activities	Welfare is defined as care and maintenance, other than in refugee and emergency situations, which aims to maintain people in a particular condition on a longer-term basis. Welfare activities are those that provide direct assistance to individuals to address immediate needs, rather than address the root causes of those needs.
Personnel	Any person doing paid or unpaid work for, or on behalf of, CA including Australian-based employees, in-country employees, Board of Directors, Diocesan Directors, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants.