

Media engagement kit for Caritas Hearts 4 Climate



How to get your message out there by engaging with local media

Local media plays a powerful role in grassroots campaigning. Positive media can help to raise awareness about injustices and create real change - change in the community and even change in government policies.

Local media outlets want to know what people in their communities are doing and why they are doing it. Good local media should reflect the community it serves and give voice to the causes you choose to champion.

At the same time media outlets are not always well resourced, so they rely on you to come to them. And that's not as hard as it may sound.

It's simply a matter of writing up a press release, making a phone call to your local newspaper, radio or television station, having a quick chat and sending your release to them. This can happen either before or after the event, or both!

Writing a press release

In this kit we've provided a press release template for Caritas Hearts 4 Climate where all you have to do is fill in the blanks and alter the release, depending on whether you want to send it before or after the event. You can adapt the press release template to suit other events.

Don't underestimate the importance of your story or the impact you can have. Media is a powerful tool!

When using this template try to include the following:

Basic information: The first couple of paragraphs should include the basic information about your film screening/ event: who, what, when, where and why.

If there has been a recent story/event in the media on climate change you could refer to this and how it relates to your parish/school/group's interest in this issue. In other words, try to make it topical.

Quotes: Quotes add punch to your story. Remember to include the name of the spokesperson.

Be Newsworthy: Stick to the point, be clear as to why your event is important and why the story needs to be heard. Try to stick to one page – less is more!

Images: Where possible, take good photos of the event and provide captions with names and details. Check that the people in the photo are happy for you to send their photo to your local media



Template media release

Media Release: [INSERT DATE]

[INSERT SCHOOL/GROUP NAME] CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER TO TAKE ACTION AND HAVE A HEART FOR THE CLIMATE

Students at [INSERT SCHOOL/GROUP NAME] on [INSERT DATE] joined in solidarity with the most marginalised globally, as part of a 'Hearts 4 Climate' campaign run by Caritas Australia, the Catholic Church's international aid and development agency.

As part of the campaign [INSERT NUMBER] [students and teachers from the school/ people from the group] are writing to the Prime Minister and his government, calling for urgent action on climate change which is already threatening communities around the world.

The letter urges the government to "have a heart for the climate" and to take actions including committing to strong emission reduction targets, supporting the shift to renewable energy and giving Australia's fair share of global funds to help poorer countries tackle climate change.

The campaign comes in the wake of Pope Francis' Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'* (Praised be) – On the care of our common home' which marks a key moment in Church history, as now more than ever we are called to care for our common home responsibly. The Encyclical calls for a new global solidarity, where all individuals, communities and governments have an essential part to play.

Caritas Australia works with communities in over 30 countries globally and within Australia. As Pope Francis notes in *Laudato Si'*, as global temperatures rise, we will experience increasingly severe impacts on a global scale. Many communities that partner with Caritas are already feeling the impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, unpredictable seasons and more extreme weather events, and are working to adapt to and mitigate the effects.

[INSERT NAME AND TITLE OF SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE] says climate change is the single biggest threat to reducing global poverty.

"While every person on the planet is affected by climate change, the impact is especially severe for women, men and children most vulnerable to extreme poverty – those who have done the least to contribute to global warming," says Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms [INSESRT LAST NAME OF SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE].

"By taking action as individuals, and as a class/whole school/group, we can make a difference to the lives of the children, women and men most affected by climate change," says Mr/Mrs/Miss [INSESRT LAST NAME OF SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE].

Take action

To learn more about climate justice, *Laudato Si'* or Caritas Hearts 4 Climate, visit www.caritas.org.au/climate/hearts-4-climate

Media contact: [Name, phone number and email address of contact]

Contacting Media

Draft a list of media publications and some particular journalists in your local area and work your way through the list. Don't forget your local radio stations, television news bulletins and newspapers. (Note: As a general rule, local television stations want to know about your event beforehand and local newspapers afterwards. Radio could be either).

Before you contact someone, make sure you have a copy of your media release and the contact details of your spokesperson handy. You can offer to email or fax your release to them; if you email it, be sure to copy the text into the body of the email instead of attaching it, as the journalist is more likely to read it. Direct contact by phone or in-person is likely to get you the best results!

Before and after your event

- Make sure you have someone organised to look after any journalists or media contacts who attend. They can help introduce spokespeople for interviews and line up photos.
- Organise somebody to take photos so you can use them to send to media after the event and/or distribute via social media online. Be sure to send these back to Caritas Australia too so we can help spread the word about your great event: email us at act@caritas.org.au
- If journalists couldn't attend in person but expressed an interest in the event, be sure to send them some photos and quotes from participants who attended along with your media release. Remember, direct contact by phone will get you the best results!
- Consider writing a Letter to the Editor for your local newspaper. Most newspapers

publish details about how to send in a Letter on their website. Read some examples of previously published Letters to give you some ideas about the length and style of writing you should aim for.

- Spread the word even further by sharing your action on social media - use the hashtag #hearts4climate and tag us @CaritasAU (Facebook) or @CaritasAust (Twitter and Instagram) so we can help you spread the word.