



## Caritas Australia's Units of Work and the BIG Water Walk at St Angela's Primary School



### Background and Context

The Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) developed a new Religious Education curriculum that inspires Faith in Action across all school levels. Central to this new curriculum is the philosophy of forming students' head, heart and hands, particularly focusing on supporting teachers and students to see their faith as one of service and action. To this end, CSPD engages with mission partners (such as Caritas Australia) to develop Units of Work that support teachers to implement the new curriculum. These Units of Work are aligned with key periods of the school / religious calendar. Caritas focuses on the season of Lent and the Project Compassion initiative, or Term 1 of the school calendar.

The key message of Project Compassion 2025 was 'Unite Against Poverty', and this — in line with the Catholic social teachings — informed the Units of Work and ultimately led to schools being encouraged to hold a BIG Water Walk.

The BIG Water Walk (BWW) is a solidarity and fundraising action for the millions of people who walk to collect clean water every day. St Angela's Primary School used the new CSPD Religious Education curriculum and the Caritas Australia Units of Work and BWW resources to shape their lessons, embed an understanding of scripture and service within their students, and organise and participate in a BWW around their school.

The BWW was a huge success at the school, supporting teachers and students to put their faith into action and raising over \$50,000. This success demonstrated the power of integrated curriculum design, faith-based learning and student-led action. This case study tells St Angela's Primary School's story.



“Forming students’ head, heart and hands is all about moving from learning about the issues, to caring about the issues, and doing something about the issues.”

— Mission Partner at CSPD.





## A Story of Faith in Action

### Starting Strong – An Engaging Launch

The BIG Water Walk (BWW) was the signature event that schools could organise and participate in as part of Project Compassion 2025. Each year Project Compassion is launched at an event hosted by the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD). Teachers and students from schools across the diocese — including St Angela's Primary School — attended the launch to hear the key message for the year, hear stories from communities (the lead story was a water story from Samoa), connect, and learn from each other.

In 2025, the Project Compassion launch was particularly successful and provided a strong foundation for the success of the BWW by engaging students and teachers in the highly relatable theme of water.

Faith in Action Coordinators and students spent a day learning about the challenges of water poverty. They learnt about water as a basic need and the challenges of water scarcity in communities around the world through presentations and trivia. A hugely impactful element of the launch was watching a video about a primary school in Samoa that had limited access to water..

Students and teachers were supported to plan how their school could contribute to Project Compassion through initiatives and activities that involved learning about water, and acting in solidarity with communities across the world.

They also learned from each other, with schools who have had success in the past sharing what they did as a community. St Joseph's Primary School in particular, inspired St Angela's to include stations for different year groups in their BIG Water Walk, which supported a real sense of embodied learning for students.



“I wouldn't have known where to start without hearing from St Joseph's.”

— Faith in Action Coordinator,  
St Angela's Primary School.

### Activating Potential – Teachers and Students

#### Learning through Faith in Action

Key to the success of the BWW and whole learning experience was the engagement and passion of the teaching team. Following the launch and the formal announcement of the BIG Water Walk event the Faith in Action Coordinator, Director of Catholic Identity and Mission, and Principal met to align on how they could adapt the curriculum and units of work from CSPD and Caritas in a way that would resonate strongly with the unique community of St Angela's, and support teachers to lead a faith based learning approach through scripture and inquiry.



“The team really inspired the whole community. Everyone felt included.”

— Director of Catholic Identity and  
Mission at St Angela's Primary School

This approach was scaffolded through video stories from overseas, questions and provocations that invited creativity and deeper engagement through ongoing conversations with students for several weeks prior to the BWW. Teachers and students explored the connection between their faith and water (*and water scarcity*). They were encouraged to consider how they use water in their life and how they relate to some of the challenges faced by others.

The learning experience was designed to engage the diversity of students at St Angela's Primary School through different approaches — tailored to different ages and learning preferences including:



- **Narrative** — Students used their imagination and empathy to reflect on their own use of water, and what they could do to support others after reading picture books, watching videos, or hearing about different experiences.
- **Relatable** — Learning experiences were designed in ways that were relatable to students from Kindergarten to Year 6.
- **Personal** — Teachers shared their own personal experiences, such as a journey to Timor Leste where one teacher worked with a school, supporting children to reflect on their own lives and be grateful.
- **Generative** — Teachers and students worked together to design stations for each year group in the BWW.

Each of these approaches were grounded in faith, linked to different pieces of scripture that supported students to explore the connections between faith, water, gratitude and service in alignment with the Catholic Social Teachings.

## The BIG Water Walk — Embodied Learning

The school organised the BWW to be a formative, embodied learning experience. Each year group held a station of the walk, designed to be a point on the journey to reflect on a piece of scripture.

The teachers organised for the walk to have obstacles and challenges (*e.g. heavy buckets, balancing on planks, etc.*) to support students to empathise with those facing water scarcity.

Each student was asked to bring in a bucket, thus involving their parents, to carry water on the walk. Due to the ongoing conversations over past weeks students were very conscious of spilling water and did all they could to avoid losing any. At the end of the BIG Water Walk students had to decide on how to use their water. There were several buckets set up with labels such as cleaning, animals, plants, drinking, etc. Students realised that the water they've been carrying doesn't go very far and they would have to get more the next day if the situation was real.

Following the event the students reflected — either by writing or creating an artwork — on the BIG Water Walk, what they've learnt, and how it has changed how they think about faith in action.



“It wasn't just one day. We learned and carry it with us... it was a good day and it was nice to reflect on what we had learnt on the walk.”

— Student at St Angela's Primary School.



“We heard in the scripture, ‘I was thirsty and you gave me water’... The BIG Water Walk was about raising money and giving things to people who need it. We want the prize to be water for people who need it.”

— Student at St Angela's Primary School.



“The journey is hard and long... they need water for more than just drinking.”

— Student at St Angela's Primary School.



“It was about feeling what they feel. It was fun, amazing and cool.”

— Student at St Angela’s Primary School.



## 8 Months On – Ongoing Impact

Students and teachers at St Angela’s Primary School remember the BIG Water Walk as a great event for the school community. Students not only remember the event as a fun learning experience but have retained a deep understanding of their faith in action. They spoke clearly about practices of empathy, solidarity, gratitude and service in their own words.

Through the learning experience spanning the BIG Water Walk day and the preceding weeks, students shared what they were learning with their parents and friends. This sense of sharing knowledge has stayed with students as they reflected on the great community involvement and their ongoing role in sharing knowledge and being of service to the community. Students also spoke about ongoing behaviour change as a result of the BIG Water Walk learning experience, such as turning taps off, watering plants with excess water and taking shorter showers.



“Everyone got involved because we were raising money for others, not ourselves... We are the leaders, even if we don’t have a badge we can make a difference.”

— Student at St Angela’s Primary School.



“We learn from others and now we share it and teach it to you.”

— Student at St Angela’s Primary School.



St Angela’s school community raised over \$50k — an extraordinary fundraising outcome. Beyond the generosity of individuals, factors affecting this result include the connection of donations with outcomes for people who need to walk for water every day. Case studies, visual wall charts and messages from the Principal in assembly used toolkit resources to *attribute dollar values to tangible outcomes* — a water pump, a toilet block. Key stage groups engaged in *healthy competition* to raise money for these items. Also key was *Dollar Match Day* which coincided perfectly with the BWW event and was promoted heavily by the school. Approximately half of all donations — both in value, ~\$17k and frequency, 339 — were made on dollar match day. On that day, 28 donors made *more than one* donation and 43 donors *only* donated on this day. 7 donated for a second time on dollar match day.

## The Big Takeaway

The BIG Water Walk at St Angela’s Primary School is a great example of integrated curriculum design, faith-based learning, and student-led action. It is clear from this example that *when the whole school community is fully engaged in a faith in action approach to learning, successful fundraising naturally follows*. The result is a strong, faith-based learning experience that resonates with students and encourages empathy and service.