

# The NFP Email Playbook

How Australian Charities Can Raise More, Engage Supporters and Grow

A practical 6-step guide to email marketing, automation and supporter engagement  
built specifically for Australian NFPs and charities.



Produced by Five Creative in partnership with Mailchimp

 [fivecreative.com.au](https://fivecreative.com.au)

# Your supporters want to hear from you

They gave because they believed in your cause. They volunteered because your mission mattered. They signed up because they wanted to stay connected. And yet, most Australian charities are leaving that relationship almost entirely on the table.

Recent fundraising benchmarks reports analysing 33,000 campaigns across 4,400+ organisations\* found that median fundraising per nonprofit declined 2% in 2025. But recurring giving surged 10.45% year-on-year, and smaller organisations that invested in retention saw a 58% surge in recurring revenue.

That gap is not explained by budget. It is explained by strategy. Specifically, by how intentionally organisations use the tools they already have to keep donors engaged. Email and automation are at the centre of it.

***This playbook covers the six areas that make the biggest difference. Written for the person in your team who actually sends the emails.***

## Feeling the squeeze?

Median nonprofit fundraising growth in 2025

**-2%**



Raisely 2026 Benchmarks (33,000 campaigns)

## Are you capturing this?

Growth in recurring giving

**+10.45%**



Raisely 2026 Benchmarks

## Is yours set up properly?

Donors say email drives their repeat giving

**48%**



Nonprofit Tech for Good 2026

## Are you leaning into this?

Australians plan to donate at EOFY this year

**83%**



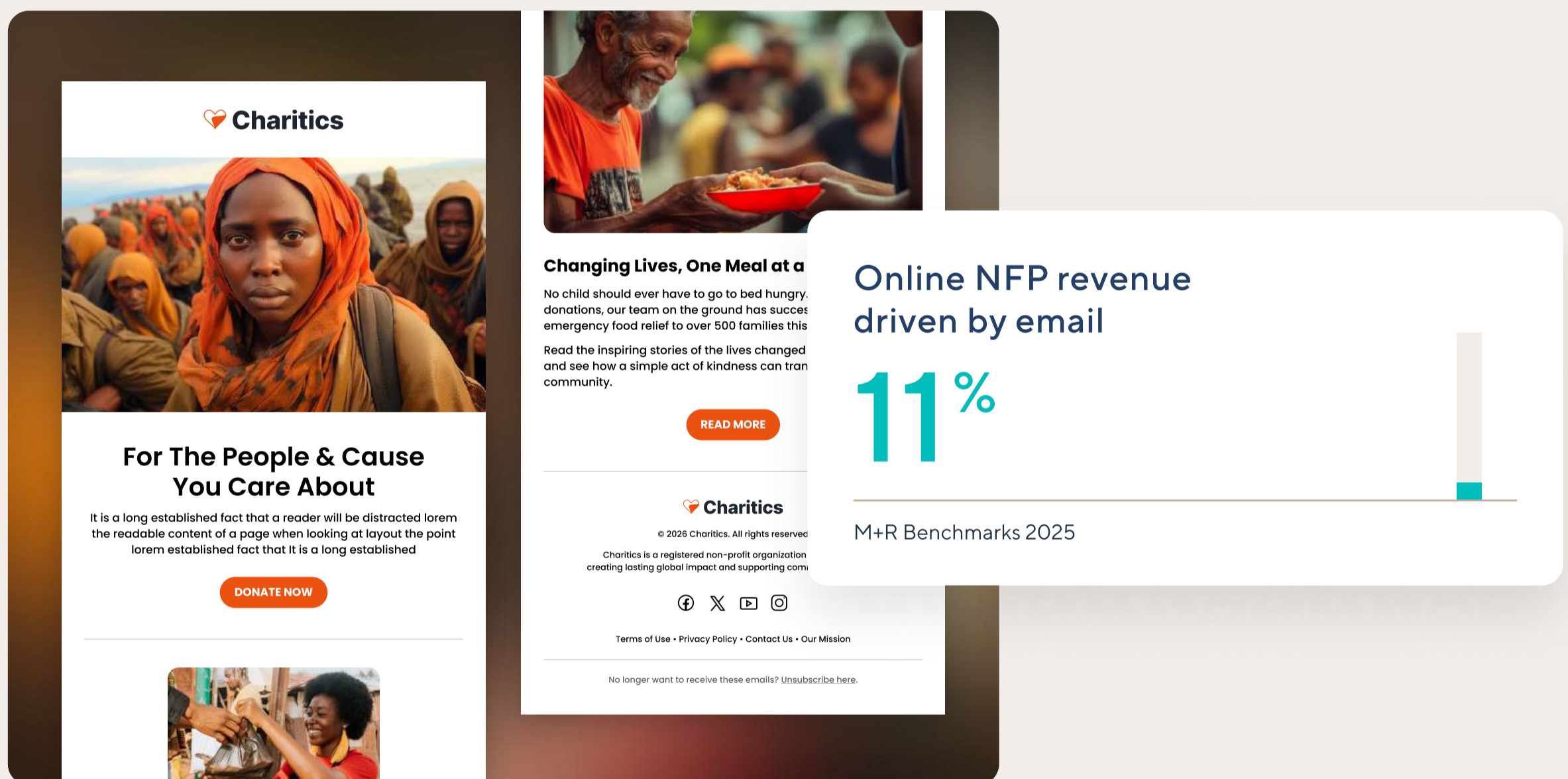
Ntegrity Research 2025


# Why email still raises more than social

Every year, another wave of advice tells nonprofits to focus on Instagram, TikTok, or the next new platform. And every year, the data says the same thing: email raises more money.

Email drove 11% of all online nonprofit revenue in 2024, and Mailchimp's own benchmarks put nonprofit click rates at 3.6% - the highest of any sector they track. Facebook Fundraising Tools contributed 0.2%. Meta fundraising ads return an average of \$0.48 for every dollar spent. And 48% of donors say regular email is most likely to keep them engaged and inspire repeat giving... only 18% said the same about social.

***Social media is rented land. Algorithms decide who sees your content. Your email list is yours. Every person on it has actively chosen to hear from you.***



 **Charities**

**For The People & Cause You Care About**

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**Online NFP revenue driven by email**

**11%**

M+R Benchmarks 2025

## The most common gaps in modern supporter journeys.

- ✘ Sending only during major appeals, and going quiet the rest of the year
- ✘ No welcome email when someone new joins the list
- ✘ No follow-up after a donation, event, or sign-up
- ✘ Treating every subscriber identically, regardless of their history
- ✘ Subject lines that sound like press releases, not conversations

Australian email campaigns consistently outperform global averages. Australian recipients have among the highest open and click-to-open rates in the world. If your open rates are below 35%, there is a measurable gap to close.



### Do this now

- ✓ Check your last three campaign open rates against the 35–45% NFP benchmark
- ✓ Search your Mailchimp account for an active welcome automation. If it's not there, that's the first thing to build
- ✓ Write down the last time you sent an email that wasn't an appeal or a newsletter. If you can't remember, your list is going cold

## Not sure where your open rates sit or why they're low?

Five Creative can complete an audit and tell you.

[Book a free audit today →](#)

# The 7 automations every NFP should have running

Automation is not about removing the human element. It is about making sure the right message reaches the right person at the right moment, without someone having to remember to send it.


The data is clear: donor retention was the #1 priority and #1 growth driver among organisations that grew their revenue last year. Reports of donor fatigue jumped 8 percentage points.


**Both signals point to the same gap, organisations acquiring donors but not following through with the sequences that build loyalty are missing out.**

Here are the seven automations that make the biggest difference:

## 1 Welcome series

3-5 emails over two weeks. Who you are, why it matters, a story from the field, and once trust and mission are established, a clear invitation to get more involved or make a first gift. Mailchimp data shows a welcome series generates 51% more revenue than a single welcome email. It is one of the highest-return automations you can have running.


 Immediately after they join your email list.

 Hold off on any donation ask in email 1. Lead with gratitude and a great story. Trust comes before the ask.

## 2 First donation acknowledgement

A warm, personal thank-you within minutes of a first donation, separate from the payment receipt. This is the moment someone feels most connected to your cause and most open to hearing from you.


 Within 5 minutes of their first donation.

 A subject line like "You just did something amazing" lands very differently from a payment confirmation. Make it feel like a high-five.

## 3 Repeat donor stewardship

Your regular givers deserve a different experience. Impact updates, behind-the-scenes access, a genuine sense of belonging. Keeping a donor costs significantly less than finding a new one.


 After their 2nd or 3rd donation.

 Shift from describing the cause to sharing the results. Give your regular givers updates that go deeper than what you post publicly. Make them feel like insiders.

## 4 Lapsed donor re-engagement


A three-email sequence for donors who have gone quiet, giving them a warm, low-friction reason to reconnect based on the impact of their past support.


 90-180 days since their last gift.

 Keep it warm. Lean away from guilt which can lead to donor fatigue. Reference something specific they contributed to last time and remind them of the difference it made.

## 5 Volunteer journey

Someone just put their hand up to give their time to your cause. That moment deserves more than a confirmation email. A short automated sequence turns a form submission into a genuine welcome, sets expectations, and makes sure they actually show up feeling confident and prepared.


 As soon as they complete the volunteer sign-up form.

 A "What to Expect" email does a lot of heavy lifting. People are far more likely to follow through when they know where to go, what to bring, and who to ask for when they arrive.

### 6 Post-event follow-up

People who attend your events are warm, engaged supporters. A well-timed sequence with photos, impact stories and a clear next step can turn a single event into ongoing support.


 24-48 hours after your event ends.



 Send photos. People love looking for themselves. It keeps the energy of the event alive long enough to invite them into what comes next.

### 7 Annual giving upgrade

A once-a-year sequence to your existing monthly givers, sharing impact and extending a gentle invitation to increase their regular gift. Even a modest uplift across your base makes a material difference to annual revenue.

 Once a year (usually on their "donor-versary").

 Lead with impact before the ask. Show them what their current gift has achieved, then invite them to do a little more. The upgrade feels like a natural next step rather than a new request.

 When to Send (The Trigger)  What Makes it Work

Most organisations discover they have fewer than two of the seven in place. A Mailchimp audit will show you exactly which are running, which are missing, and what to build first.



### Surge in recurring giving among smaller NFPs in 2025

58%

The organisations growing aren't finding more new donors. They're keeping the ones they already have with better email.

Raisely 2026 Fundraising Benchmarks



### Do this now

- ✓ Open your email platform and count how many active automated sequences you have running. Most of us find there is always one more sequence we could add once we stop to look
- ✓ If you do not have a welcome series, start there. It is the highest-return automation you can build
- ✓ Check whether your first-donation thank-you is a warm, branded email or just the receipt from your payment processor

Five Creative can build all 7 automations for you, or help you work out which to prioritise first.

Either way, a free audit is the fastest way to know exactly where to start.

[Book yours today →](#)

# How to connect your CRM and fundraising platform

Your donor data and your email platform should be talking to each other. For many Australian charities there is a gap there, which means your email tool has no visibility of who your donors are, how much they have given, or when they last engaged.

Closing that gap is the difference between sending a generic email to your whole list and sending a targeted appeal to lapsed donors who gave in the same month last year. One converts. The other contributes to donor fatigue.



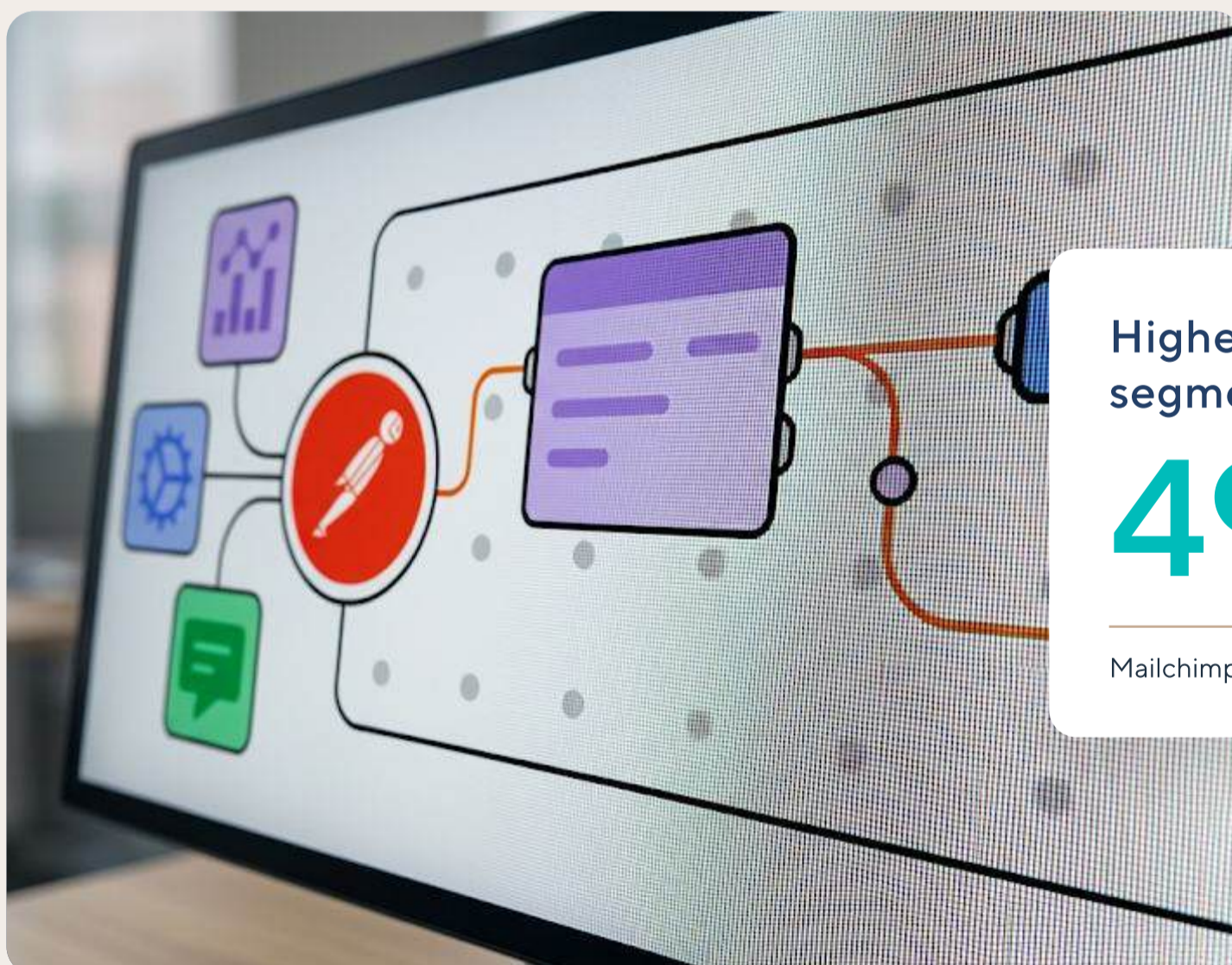
## Without integration

- ✘ Your email platform doesn't know who has donated
- ✘ Everyone gets the same appeal
- ✘ Lapsed donors receive cheerful newsletters
- ✘ No donation data for segmentation
- ✘ Manual exports and imports every campaign



## With integration

- ✔ Donors, lapsed donors and supporters segmented automatically
- ✔ Appeals sent only to the right audience
- ✔ Re-engagement sequences trigger on giving history
- ✔ Donation size used to personalise asks
- ✔ Data flows in real time, no manual work



Higher click-through rate from segmented campaigns

**49%**

Mailchimp segmentation study, 9M recipients

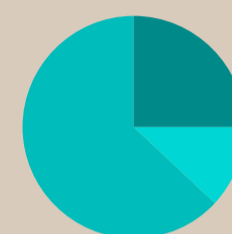


## Common platforms in the Australian NFP sector

Most major fundraising and CRM platforms used by Australian charities can connect directly with your email platform, either natively or via Zapier including:

- ✓ Salesforce (and Nonprofit Success Pack)
- ✓ Raisely
- ✓ Donorbox
- ✓ Blackbaud / Raiser's Edge
- ✓ Funraisin
- ✓ MyCause

Organisations with properly integrated accounts typically see 2–3x higher click-to-conversion rates on appeals compared to those sending to unsegmented lists.



### Do this now

- ✓ List every platform your organisation uses to manage donors, volunteers and events
- ✓ Check whether each one has an active Mailchimp integration, or if data is being moved manually
- ✓ If you're using Raisely, Donorbox, Funraisin or Salesforce, a Five Creative audit will show you the fastest path to a live integration

## Integration is the most common gap we find in audits.

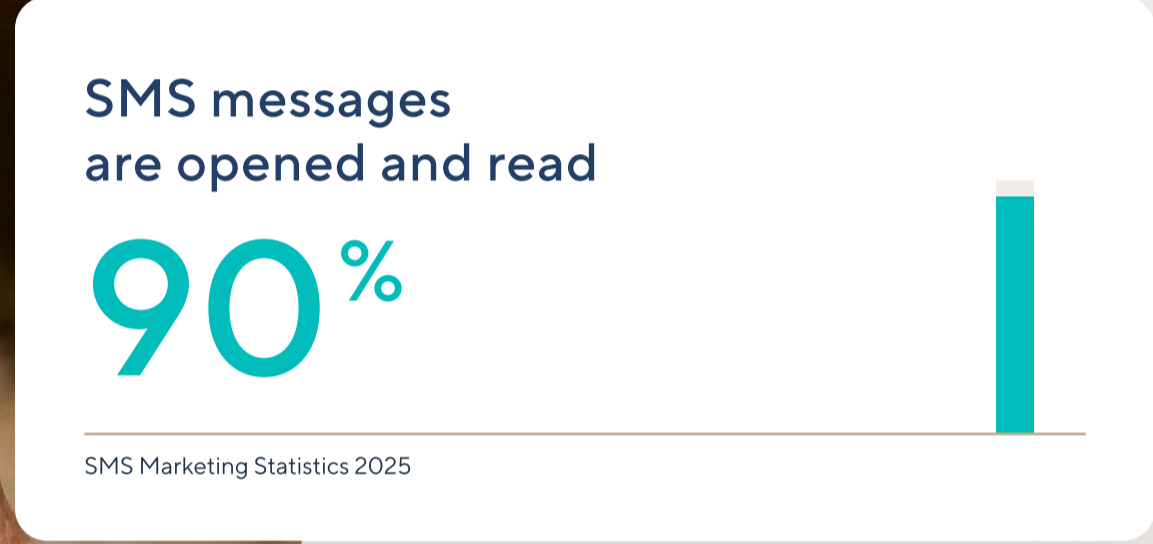
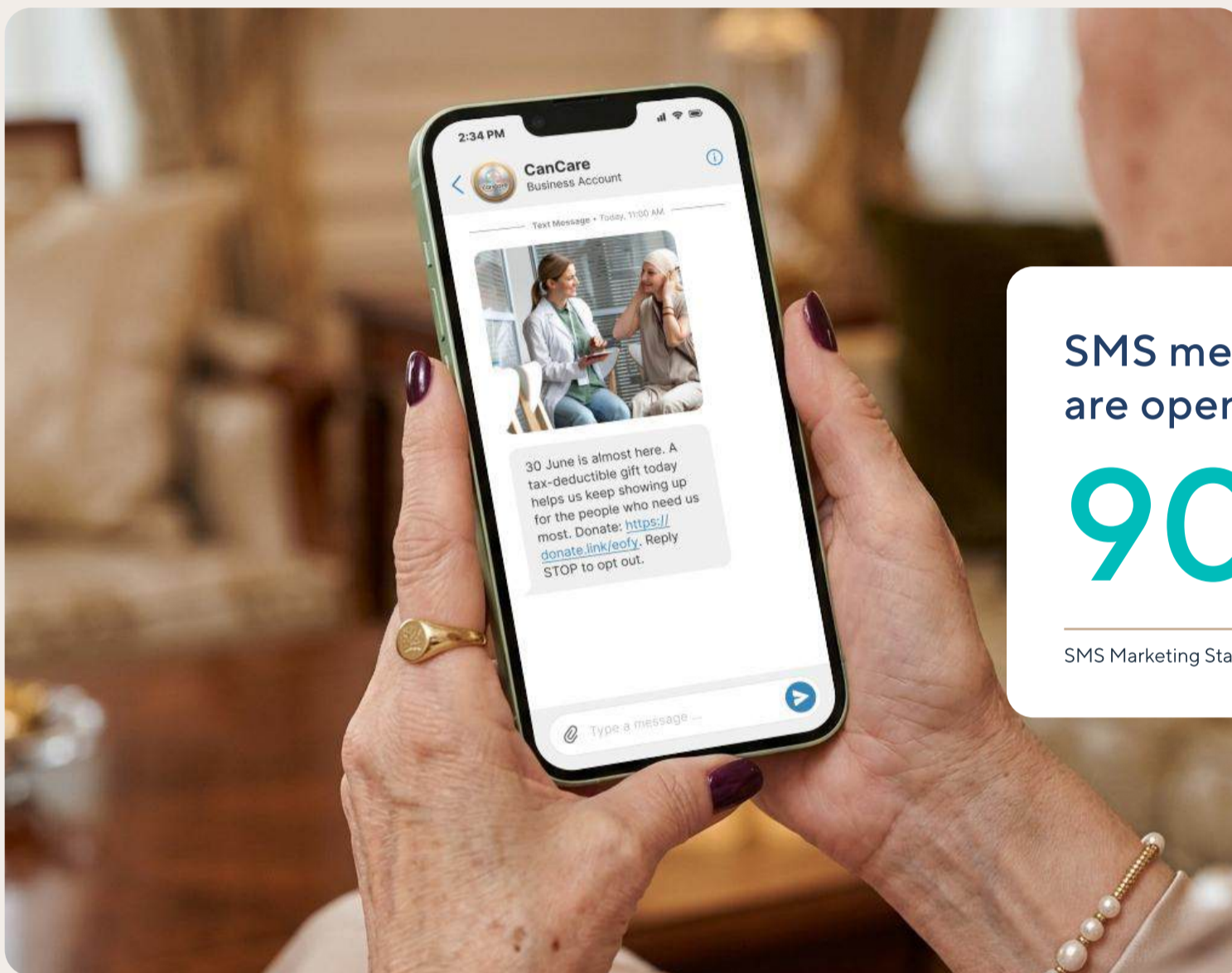
Get in touch and we will work out the fastest path to get it live, so your email platform knows exactly who it is talking to.

Get in touch →

# Email and SMS: the combination most NFPs are missing

SMS is one of the most underleveraged tools available to Australian fundraisers right now. Email builds the relationship and makes the case. SMS creates the moment of action. Together they are significantly more effective than either channel alone, particularly in the final days of an appeal when urgency matters most.

Nonprofits can quickly reach supporters with SMS, driving immediate action and maintaining strong connections, all at a low cost.



## When to use each channel



### Email is for...

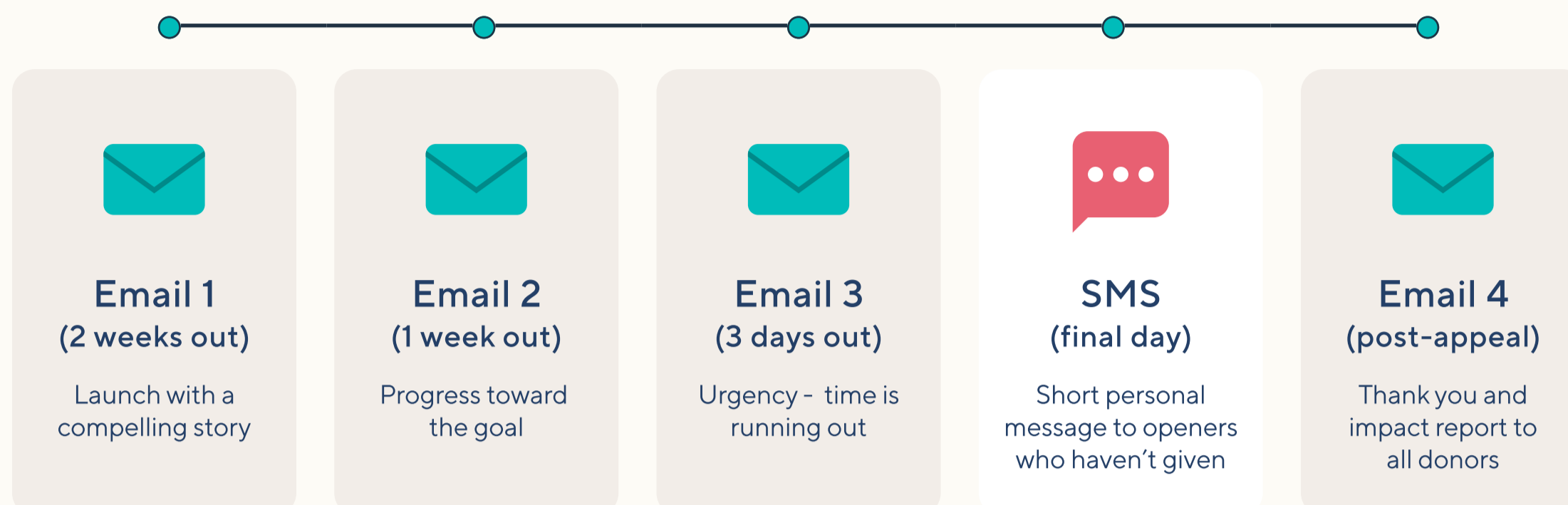
- ✔ Building the relationship over time
- ✔ Storytelling, impact updates, newsletters
- ✔ Appeals with context and images
- ✔ Welcome and nurture sequences
- ✔ Post-event follow-up



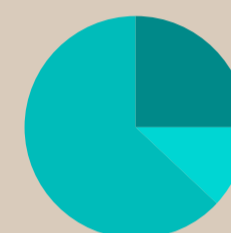
### SMS is for...

- ✔ EOFY and appeal deadlines in the final 48 hours
- ✔ Disaster appeals and matched giving windows
- ✔ A direct giving ask to engaged contacts who have not yet donated
- ✔ Re-engaging contacts who have stopped opening emails
- ✔ Event day logistics and booking confirmations

## A typical EOFY combined campaign



SMS is opt-in only, which means the contacts you reach have actively said yes to hearing from you. Five Creative can set it up as part of an audit or strategy engagement. If you are on Mailchimp, SMS is already built in. 96% of Australians use their mobile for messaging every day.



### Do this now

- ✓ Check whether your current email platform includes SMS capability, and if so what is available on your plan
- ✓ Identify the last 48 hours of your next appeal and plan an SMS specifically for that window
- ✓ Build a segment of contacts who opened your last appeal but did not click, that is your quick win SMS list

**Five Creative can set up SMS for your account and build your first combined campaign.**

Book a free audit today.

Book a free audit today →

# What a healthy NFP email account actually looks like

Strong deliverability and engagement do not happen by accident. A lot can work against you under the surface, and poor account health directly reduces how many supporters actually see your emails.

Metric	Healthy	Worth Reviewing
Open rate	40–48%*	Below 25%
Click rate	3–6%	Below 1.5%
Unsubscribe rate	Below 0.5%	Above 1%
Bounce rate	Below 2%	Above 5%
Spam complaint rate	Below 0.08%	Above 0.2%

\* Mailchimp's published global NFP averages: 40.2% open, 3.6% click, 0.19% unsubscribe, 1.72% bounce sit at the lower end of the healthy ranges above. Source: Mailchimp Email Marketing Benchmarks.



Average nonprofit open rate on Mailchimp.

# 40.2%

The benchmark to beat. Top AU NFPs are pushing 45–48%.  
Mailchimp Email Marketing Benchmarks



## The four things that most affect account health

- 1. List hygiene:** Regularly clean unengaged contacts. Sending to people who never open actively hurts your deliverability. Segment them out and run a win-back campaign before archiving.
- 2. Sender authentication:** SPF, DKIM and DMARC authentication tells email providers your messages are legitimate. Without it, emails are more likely to land in spam regardless of how good the content is.
- 3. Segmentation:** Relevant content to the right segments keeps engagement high and unsubscribe rates low. Sending the same email to everyone leaves a lot of performance on the table.
- 4. Send frequency:** Most NFPs send too infrequently. A list that goes weeks without contact becomes harder to re-engage when you need it most.

Most NFPs sit below the 40.2% Mailchimp average. The organisations breaking above it do so through these four practices: cleaner lists, sender authentication, smarter segmentation, and consistent send frequency.



### Do this now

- ✓ Pull your last campaign report and check your open rate, click rate, bounce rate and unsubscribe rate against the table above
- ✓ Check whether you have active segments for donors, lapsed donors and non-donors
- ✓ Verify your sending domain is authenticated with SPF, DKIM and DMARC
- ✓ Check when you last sent an email outside of an appeal or newsletter. If it has been more than four weeks, your send frequency needs attention
- ✓ Look at your last campaign and check the unsubscribe reason if your platform captures it. Patterns there tell you a lot about whether your content or frequency is off

We'll audit every one of these areas and give you a clear action list in a free strategy call.

Free audit →

# How to prepare for EOFY and Christmas appeals

For most Australian charities, two windows account for the majority of annual donation revenue: EOFY (June) and Christmas (November–December). The scale of this opportunity is significant.

**83%**

of Australians plan to donate the same or more at EOFY

Ntegrity Research 2025

**75%**

of appeal revenue raised within 4 weeks, 2 weeks faster than 2023

Raisely 2025 Benchmarks

**3.7<sup>x</sup>**

appeal revenue multiplier when matched giving is used

Raisely 2025 Benchmarks

Many NFPs see more than 50% of their EOFY revenue come in during the final week of June and the majority of that in the final three days. That makes your communications strategy in those last 72 hours more valuable than everything you send in the first three weeks combined.

In 2024, the median appeal raised 75% of its total within four weeks of launch, two weeks faster than 2023. Campaigns that front-load urgency and channel alignment are pulling ahead. Your email strategy is the primary lever.

## EOFY: Your 3-week plan from here

Reading this in June? Good.

The urgency window is where the money moves. Data shows 75% of appeal revenue comes in within the first four weeks of launch, with the final 72 hours delivering the biggest single spike.

<b>Week 1</b> June 6–13	Launch your appeal to your full list with your lead story. Set up retargeting for anyone who clicks but does not donate. Check your donation form is current and optimised. A well-set-up form lifts revenue by 1.6x on its own.
<b>Week 2</b> June 13–20	Send a progress update, excluding anyone who has already given. Resend to non-openers from Week 1 with a fresh subject line. If you have a matched giving partner, activate them now. Matched giving multiplies appeal performance by 3.7x.
<b>Week 3</b> June 20–27	Urgency email to non-donors, framed around the June 30 tax deadline. Include a regular giving option here. Retargeting running across LinkedIn, Meta and Google.
<b>Final 72 hours</b> June 28–30	Final email to non-donors. SMS to every engaged contact who has not yet given. Single call to action. The path to donate should have zero friction. This is where most of the money moves.
<b>Post</b> June 30	Thank-you sequence to all donors within 24 hours. Impact report within two weeks. Transition into year-round nurture so the relationship stays warm until Christmas.

### Where the money actually comes from

83% of total appeal revenue comes from donations over \$50. The most common gift is still \$50. Your email strategy is the primary tool for cultivating relationships and giving donors a compelling reason to stretch their gift.

(Raisely 2025 Fundraising Benchmarks)

## Christmas: the key differences

The Christmas window is longer, running from late October through to Christmas Day, and the emotional register is different. Where EOFY is about tax effectiveness and deadlines, Christmas is about generosity and impact. That shift in motivation changes how you write, what you lead with, and when you send.

- Inbox competition peaks in December. Subject line testing matters more in this window than any other time of year
- Short, emotionally led emails outperform long-form content. Lead with a story, not a summary
- A “give a gift that matters” frame consistently outperforms direct donation asks in this window
- Mid-November through early December is significantly less competitive than the pre-Christmas rush. Getting in early pays off

### The most common mistake

Starting too late. The optimal launch for a Christmas appeal is late October. By the time most organisations send their first email, the ones that planned ahead have already had three meaningful touchpoints with the same audience. Planning is the competitive advantage.



### Do this now

- ✓ Map out your Christmas campaign window now, even if the appeal is months away. Lock in your launch date before the calendar fills up
- ✓ Check whether your donation form has been updated recently. An optimised form lifts revenue by 1.6x
- ✓ Start building or refreshing your impact story now. The best Christmas emails are built around a single, specific person or moment

## Need help pulling your Christmas campaign together?

Book a free strategy call with Five Creative.

Free audit →

# Ready to put this into practice?

Get a free Mailchimp audit from Five Creative.

Five Creative is a certified Mailchimp Pro Partner and full-service digital agency working with Australian NFPs and charities.  
We know what good looks like in your sector.

A free audit is a full health check of your email setup, with a scored report, clear findings and a prioritised action list. It covers:

- Deliverability and domain authentication
- Audience structure, segments and list health
- Automations and welcome sequences
- Forms, popups and signup flows
- Email templates and mobile responsiveness
- Analytics and send optimisation
- EOFY and Christmas appeal readiness

## Free.

Practical and straight to the point.

You will leave knowing exactly where things stand and what to do first.

Book your free audit at [fivecreative.com.au/email-playbook](https://fivecreative.com.au/email-playbook)