



# **Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St. Benedict**

**Safeguarding Audit Report  
December 2024**

National Catholic  
Safeguarding Standards

Report prepared by:



*A safe Church for everyone*

**Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd acknowledges the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families, the failure of the Catholic Church to protect, believe and respond justly to children and vulnerable adults, and the consequent breaches of community trust.**

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children, and adults at risk.

This report is available on the [ACSL website](#).

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## Foreword

Safeguarding certification by ACSL is an independent recognition that a religious entity and its ministries meet the requirements of the second edition of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. Certification achievement is measured against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards set by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia as the minimum benchmark for providing a safe Church for everyone. Compliance with the Standards is demonstrated through an independent assessment.

NCSS Certification:

- Provides independent recognition that the Church Authority is committed to safeguarding.
- Fosters a culture of quality and continuous improvement.
- Reduces and mitigates safeguarding risks.
- Provides the Australian community with confidence that the Church is taking action to address past abuse.
- Fosters a systematic approach to safeguarding quality and performance.
- Increases capability and safeguarding capacity.
- Complies with regulatory requirements, and, where relevant, established canonical requirements.

The following report is based on an independent assessment of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict's performance against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. The audit was undertaken and led by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited. The report includes compliance level ratings for each standard, criteria, and indicator, and includes explanatory notes for key findings.

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the Congregation and its representatives at the time of the assessment, interviews with personnel, the fieldwork observations of the auditors in the ministries and offices visited and where applicable any further subsequent information the Congregation has supplied through the reporting process.

Certification issued by ACSL and/or its accredited auditors relates to safeguarding practices. It does not guarantee the safety, quality or acceptability of a participating organisation, its services or programs, or that legislative and funding requirements are being, or will be, met for other purposes.

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Context

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) was established in 2020, to bring together the work of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd, the Australian Catholic Centre for Professional Standards and the Australian Catholic Ministry Register. ACSL is a company limited by guarantee, whose membership is composed of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia, and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons.

ACSL is committed to fostering a nationally consistent culture of safety and care throughout the Catholic Church in Australia. This includes providing a range of services to support the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), a framework for the protection and care of children and adults at risk. ACSL maintains the NCSS, undertakes audits and reviews of Church entities, and publishes reports which demonstrate a Church entity's commitment to the NCSS.

ACSL's core values are leadership, integrity, and compassion. These values guide the way we work and inform cultural change within the Catholic Church and the wider community. We take our duty to care for and protect all children and adults at risk seriously and have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles). The National Principles are derived from the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) which relate specifically to child safety.

The NCSS give effect to the National Principles and provide the framework used by the Catholic Church to respond to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The NCSS are designed to contextualise the National Principles and Child Safe Standards to the Catholic Church in Australia. For more information about the NCSS please see: [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards - Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd](#).

This audit report presents the results of the assessment against the NCSS for the Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St. Benedict.

## 1.2 Background

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan of the Order of St Benedict were the first religious Congregation founded in Australia in 1857 by Archbishop John Bede Polding, an English Benedictine monk; and Mother Scholastica Gibbons, an Irish Sister of Charity. From the outset, they committed themselves to assisting vulnerable women and children in the early settlement of Sydney. Their early works included the House of the Good Shepherd for destitute women in Pitt Street and the Catholic Orphan School in Parramatta.

In more recent times, the Sisters of the Good Samaritans have involved themselves in ministering to Indigenous communities, women and children impacted by domestic violence, the homeless, refugees, asylum seekers, prisoners and the environment. The Sisters of the Good Samaritan minister in Australia, Japan, Kiribati and the Philippines.

The Superior of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Catherine McCahill sgs has served on the Congregation's leadership team since 2011. The Director of Operations, the Safeguarding Coordinators in Australia, Kiribati, and the Philippines, and the Professional Standards Adviser support the Superior and Council in meeting their legislative, pastoral, and canonical safeguarding responsibilities.

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG) was formed in 2017, and the mandate was approved in 2018. The Advisory Group's core purpose is to ensure independence, transparency and accountability in matters regarding professional conduct and safeguarding. SAG satisfies NCSS Indicator 1.2.2 and is mandated to provide advice and support to the Superior and Council in the leadership and coordination of the Congregation's policy and protocols relating to the protection of children, young people

and adults at risk where Sisters live and minister. In addition, SAG reviews safeguarding policies, procedures and initiatives, including making recommendations. The SAG has a governance role in reviewing policies and practices following complaints, incidents and concerns.

### 1.3 Audit Approach

The purpose of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards is to build a culture of shared responsibility for safeguarding and to ensure that policies, practices, and codes of behaviour work together to prevent, detect, and respond appropriately to potential or actual incidents of abuse of children and adults at risk.

The audit processes we have undertaken are intended to provide reasonable assurance that safeguarding controls have been designed appropriately and are operating effectively. Therefore, this report provides a point-in-time assessment of the safeguarding practices implemented by the Congregation and the extent to which they meet the requirements of the NCSS. The desktop review was completed by ACSL.

The International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing (IIA Standards) are developed by the Global IIA and followed by all IIA members in Australia. The Standards include principles and requirements for undertaking professional and internal auditing and for evaluating internal audit performance.

ACSL utilises an efficient risk assessment mechanism that permits its auditors to focus their efforts on risks that are proportionate to the purpose, size, complexity, and structure of a Church entity. This approach to planning audits ensures optimum use of the Church entity's limited resources, has maximum impact on the activities, ministries, and parishes, and ensures constant stakeholder engagement. It is also congruent with the IIA Standards.

ACSL assesses the risk management safeguarding practices of a Church entity through a multilayered system keeping in mind IIA Standard 2010.A1 which states: "The internal audit (here meaning the Church entity) activity's plan of engagements must be based on a documented risk assessment, undertaken at least annually. The input of senior management and the board must be considered in this process." ACSL can thus provide objective assurance that the Church entity is complying with the risk management components of the NCSS.

Prior to the field work stage, ACSL and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan confirmed the scope of the audit. This is normative practice. The sample represents the depth and breadth of the Congregational activities and thus offers a fair and reasonable insight into how safeguarding practices are embedded in the Congregation, including the Congregation's ministries outside Australia. Formalising safeguarding practices for adults at risk is a relatively recent requirement of the NCSS. For this reason, developing and embedding safeguarding requirements for this vulnerable group is a work in progress for many Church entities, and this is taken into account in an NCSS audit.

## 1.4 In scope assessment

The Congregation was assessed against Edition 2 of the NCSS, covering both children and adults at risk. In August 2024, ACSL completed a review audit of the Congregation's NCSS Self-Assessment report of evidence of their congruency with the NCSS. Fieldwork was conducted from 7 to 11 October 2024. The auditor also met some personnel by video conference prior to the fieldwork. Over 30 Sisters and staff were selected to be interviewed as part of the audit process. This report was completed in December 2024.

The audit scope included:

- Audit activities at the Congregation's administrative centres.
- Interviews, observations, and enquiry with the Congregational leadership, including their Safeguarding Advisory Group and relevant ministerial personnel.
- A review of key safeguarding documents, policies, and procedures.
- Assessment of the design and testing of the operation of safeguarding controls implemented by the Congregation.
- Site visits to:
  - Northcote Office, Melbourne, VIC
  - Congregation Office, Glebe. NSW
  - Nudgee Office, Nudgee, QLD
- Interviews with personnel – inclusive of Sisters and people in paid roles.

The full audit report is also publicly available on the Publications and Reports page of the [ACSL website](#).

## 1.5 Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and its representatives at the time of the assessment and, where applicable, any subsequent information the Congregation has supplied through the reporting process.

Certification issued by ACSL and/or its accredited auditors does not guarantee the safety, quality or acceptability of a participating organisations, its services, or programs, or that legislative and funding requirements are being, or will be, met.

Signed:



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Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd



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## 2. Overall Audit Findings

***The NCSS assessment of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan indicates that the Congregation is successfully implementing and embedding a culture of safeguarding throughout its large and diverse organisation.***

ACSL's audit methodology, developed for the Church by KPMG, uses a four-point maturity scale to assess of the implementation of NCSS by a Church entity<sup>1</sup>. This maturity scale provides a more granular analysis than mere compliance and provides for a program of continuous improvement.

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan provided ACSL with copies of their policies and procedures through the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal. The ministries that were included in the audit scope safeguarding practices were included in the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal. ACSL reviewed these self-assessments, in addition to reviewing safeguarding information available on the Sisters of the Good Samaritans websites. The audit team visited the Congregation offices and met personnel in person or via videoconference, where personnel provided additional evidence and essential clarification of information supplied in the self-assessment for each NCSS indicator.

ACSL uses standard sampling processes that are normative practices of all audit methodologies. The sampling is sufficient to measure the performance and test the safeguarding controls in place to mitigate the occurrences of harm to children and adults at risk. The findings, recommendations and management actions in this report should be interpreted in this manner – specific findings relate to the ministries and activities of the Congregation which were included in the audit scope and as such may not be generalised throughout the Congregation.

In general, safeguarding systems can be implemented by three different models – centralised, devolved and hybrid. In a centralised model, safeguarding decisions and risk management are controlled and managed by a centrally coordinated function, which provides a more comprehensive, lower risk approach. In a devolved model, responsibility for governance and risk management is maintained at a local level by multiple agencies, requiring significant communication and collaboration across the entity. A hybrid is a mixture of both centralised and devolved models.

The safeguarding system adopted by the Congregation follows the centralised model. Standards, policies, procedures and documents are created centrally with advice and best practices provided and promoted from this central function. The culture of the central function facilitates and where necessary regulates the implementation and adoption of safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. The central tenets of the safeguarding policies, procedures and practices have been developed centrally; these have been adapted and enculturated to the Congregation's ministries outside Australia.

This report evaluates the adoption and implementation of the NCSS across the entire Congregation including the central function, ministries, and offices. In Section 5, the overall assessment of each indicator is listed against the Compliance Assessment Scale described in Appendix A.

Our assessment indicates that the Sisters of the Good Samaritan has fully implemented or has progressed in the implementation of 100% of the relevant indicators to their operations. Assessment for each maturity scale is as follows:

- 96 indicators are developed and embedded.
- 4 indicators are substantially progressed.

Of the 104 NCSS indicators applicable to full audited Church entities, 4 of these are not relevant to the Congregation's operations.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Appendix A for definitions of the maturity scale used for the Compliance Assessment.



## Table 1 Summary of NCSS Assessment

Table 1 below shows the overall assessment for each of the Standards.

Audit recommendations, contained in Section 3, are classified according to priority and urgency for remediation.<sup>2</sup>

- There are no Priority 1 (high rated) audit recommendations for the Congregation.
- There are 3 Priority 2 (medium rated) recommendations.
- There is 1 Priority 3 (low rated) recommendation.

National Catholic Safeguarding Standard	# NCSS indicators	Not Relevant	Assessment of Implementation			
			Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1: Committed leadership, governance & culture	17	-	16	1	-	-
2: Children and adults are safe, informed and participate	6	-	5	1	-	-
3: Partnering with families, carers and communities	6	-	6		-	-
4: Equity is promoted, and diversity is respected	4	-	4	-	-	-
5: Robust human resource management	22	3	19	-	-	-
6: Effective complaints management	19	-	18	1	-	-
7: Ongoing training & education	11	-	10	1	-	-
8: Safe physical and online environments	7	-	7	-	-	-
9: Continuous improvement	6	1	5	-	-	-
10: Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults	6	-	6	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>4</b>		
			<b>100%</b>		<b>0%</b>	

The key audit observations are summarised in Section 4.

The Assessment of Compliance with NCSS indicators is detailed in Section 5 of this report.

We would like to thank the leadership team of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and all personnel who were involved in the audit for their cooperation and assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Refer Appendix B for definitions of the Priority ratings used for audit recommendations.

### 3. Summary of Recommendations

Based on these detailed observations, the ACSL audit team makes the following strategic recommendations to the Superior and Council of the Superior and those with particular responsibilities in the area of Safeguarding.

These recommendations are grouped by NCSS Capability Area; the specific audit findings are listed by NCSS Standard in this Section.

#### Capability Area: Leadership, monitoring and improvement

(Standards 1 and 9)

NCSS Standards 1 and 9 focus on leadership, monitoring and improvement. The Congregation has worked in partnership with the local Sisters in ministries outside Australia. It has invested considerable resources in supporting the implementation of a safeguarding culture. The discussion between ACSL and the Safeguarding Coordinators in Australia, Kiribati and the Philippines reveals an emphasis on implementing culturally appropriate safeguarding processes.

<p><i>Planning &amp; Monitoring:</i> The Congregation will continue to deliver relevant formation in safeguarding in their ministries outside Australia which will be contextualised to local cultures.</p> <p><i>Agreed Action:</i> Agreed</p> <p><i>Date:</i> 30 June 2025</p>	<b>Priority 3</b>
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#### Capability Area: Engaging with children, adults, families and communities

(Standards 2, 3 and 4)

NCSS Standards 2, 3 & 4 are focused on empowering children and adults to have a say in decisions that affect them as this is an integral element of a safe Church for everyone. The recommendations below are designed to further assist the Congregation in connecting with families, carers and communities, articulating decision-making process, recognising people's diverse needs and circumstances and building a safeguarding culture where ministries and activities are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways that facilitate self-determination.

<p><i>Engagement:</i> The Congregation has identified it needs to continue to implement strategies to engage the support team and Sisters who are receiving services.</p> <p><i>Agreed Action:</i> Agreed</p> <p><i>Date:</i> 30 June 2025</p>	<b>Priority 2</b>
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#### Capability Area: Right people, right role, right knowledge

(Standards 5 and 7)

NCSS Standards 5 and 7 are focused on people; the recommendations below are designed to ensure the Congregation continues to have the right people in the right roles with the right knowledge.

<p><i>Training and Development:</i> The Congregation identified it needs to continue formation to personnel on the 'Code of Practice' and on 'Ways of Working' policies and practices.</p> <p><i>Agreed Action:</i> Agreed</p> <p><i>Date:</i> 30 November 2025</p>	<p><b>Priority 2</b></p>
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**Capability Area: Systems, Policies and Procedures**

(Standards 6, 8 and 10)

NCSS Standards 6, 8 and 10 are focused on how the Congregation ensures its safeguarding processes are cohesive; the recommendations below are designed to ensure the systems, policies and procedures are effectively working in practice.

<p><i>Complaint Management:</i> Revise the complaints script, ensure it is visible on all desks, and provide refresher training to all relevant personnel.</p> <p><i>Agreed Action:</i> Agreed</p> <p><i>Date:</i> 30 March 2025</p>	<p><b>Priority 2</b></p>
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## 4. Audit Observations

### NCSS Standard 1 – Committed leadership, governance, and culture.

The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded 16 of the 17 indicators for this standard. One indicator is developed.

This Standard focuses on how leadership influences a positive safeguarding culture. Strong leadership includes an accountable and transparent governance structure and acknowledges that specific groups of people are at increased risk of experiencing abuse and require heightened awareness of the situations that make them more vulnerable.

**Assessment of the requirements of this Standard 1 indicate that there is committed leadership in the governance of the Congregation to embed a safeguarding culture throughout the Congregation.**

#### OBSERVATIONS

- The Congregation is clear in its intent to take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.
- The Congregation has invested in several Safeguarding Coordinators – in Australia, Philippines and Kiribati. These people provide safeguarding resources, support and advice to personnel in ministry.
- The central office oversees and continually supports the implementation of safeguarding standards and monitors compliance with legal responsibilities including Working with Children Checks (WWCC), Workplace Health and Safety and Australian Privacy legislation.
- The Congregation has an approved Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Commitment Statement which is publicly available.
- The Congregation has a Code of Practice (or Conduct) which is designed for Sisters, employees, and Oblates. This Code sets clear behavioural standards towards children and adults at risk and is available in multiple languages.
- The personnel interviewed and ministries reviewed demonstrate a culture of safeguarding children and adults, by championing and modelling sound practices, procedures, and language.
- The fieldwork investigation revealed that safeguarding practices are developed and embedded in Australian ministries and developed in ministries outside Australia.
- Personnel have a good understanding of record-keeping processes for safeguarding and know to contact the Safeguarding Coordinator for support.

#### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Given the diverse nature of the ministries outside Australia, the three Safeguarding Coordinators will continuously need to work collaboratively and support personnel in their local context.

## **NCSS Standard 2 – Children and adults are safe, informed and participate.**

Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded five of the six indicators for this standard. One indicator is developed.

Standard 2 embeds the rights of children and adults through empowerment and participation. It outlines the importance of providing them with information and opportunities to participate and emphasises the responsibility of the Congregation to provide access to this information.

The Congregation has demonstrated significant efforts to be inclusive and engage children and adults at risk. The audit team made the following key observations:

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- Discussions with personnel and documentation review at the Congregation offices confirm their commitment to and awareness of safeguarding practices.
- Moreover, in the ministries outside Australia which are engaged with children, personnel demonstrated knowledge and awareness of safeguarding concerns.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- The Congregation will continue to develop documents and processes to engage adults at risk.

## **NCSS Standard 3 – Partnering with families, carers, and communities.**

Families, carers and communities are informed and involved in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults.

Based on the audit findings, the Congregation has developed and embedded all six indicators for this standard.

Standard 3 is aimed at understanding how well safeguarding is embedded across all Congregational activities and operations. Safeguarding is most effective when an inclusive approach is taken that actively encourages the participation and involvement of families and carers.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- Opportunities are available for people to participate in decisions affecting them.
- The Congregation provides clear information to people who are engaged with their ministries.
- Clear information is available to people who participate in ministry.

## **NCSS Standard 4 – Equity is promoted, and diversity is respected.**

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded all four indicators for this standard.

Every human person has inherent human dignity regardless of their personal attributes or characteristics. The purpose of Standard 4 is to acknowledge the diversity of people’s needs and circumstances by building a safeguarding culture where ministries and services are provided in culturally safe ways that facilitate self-determination.

The audit team made the following key observations.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

- The Congregation encourages cultural diversity.
- The Congregation is attentive to the needs of members in ministries outside Australia.
- The Congregation promotes cultural diversity and is attentive to the needs of members in ministries outside Australia

## **NCSS Standard 5 – Robust human resource management.**

People working with children and adults are suitable and supported to reflect safeguarding values in practice.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded all the relevant 19 indicators for this standard.

Standard 5 is focused on the personnel (Sisters, staff, and volunteers) who are part of the Congregation. The Standard expects human resource management to demonstrate a commitment to implementing a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. The audit process examines how best practice standards are applied to how personnel are recruited, inducted, and supported in ministry.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

- A zero-tolerance of abuse approach is explicit in advertising, screening, and recruitment practices for personnel.
- Recruitment practices follow strong human resource management practices.
- The Congregation has comprehensive recruitment policies and procedures that outline safeguarding requirements in its advertising, vetting, and screening of personnel.
- All personnel who are legally required to hold a WWCC have the validity of their checks monitored through several systems, including a centralised and non-centralised system.
- All personnel undertake safeguarding induction prior to commencing in their roles.
- All personnel undertake safeguarding formation as they commence work with the Congregation. The safeguarding formation has two dimensions – one which provides the necessary and detailed safeguarding information and training, and one which focuses on how the charism of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan is integral to safeguarding.
- Congregational formation programs are robust and address safeguarding needs.

## NCSS Standard 6 – Effective complaints management

Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities, and personnel.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded 18 indicators of the 19 for this standard. One indicator is developed.

NCSS Standard 6 requires the Church entity's complaint management processes to be clear, transparent, and easy to understand. An audit assesses both the effectiveness of the complaint management process and that the roles and responsibilities of those involved in managing the process are clear. Further, it should specify what supports will be offered to all parties to a complaint. The audit also assesses whether all personnel interviewed in the Sisters of the Good Samaritan are aware of the complaint processes.

The audit focuses on reviewing current complaint management practices. This includes policies and procedures in place to prevent, detect, report, and respond to all incidents and complaints, and the associated training, awareness, and education available for all personnel. The ACSL audit does not re-assess the outcomes of individual complaints.

### OBSERVATIONS

- The Congregation has an effective complaints management system.
- The audit team interviews with Congregation Safeguarding personnel commended their practical and supportive approach to implementing practices in their cultures.
- Personnel are aware of their legal responsibilities.
- Appropriate supports are in place for anyone who brings forward a complaint.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- It could be useful for the Congregation to develop an easy-to-read flow chart of the complaint process. This would assist reception personnel to easily explain the process to an inquirer if they wanted to make a complaint.

## NCSS Standard 7 – Ongoing education and training

Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and adults safe through information, ongoing education and training.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded 10 of the 11 indicators for this standard. One indicator is developed.

NCSS Standard 7 requires the Congregation to provide ongoing education and training to equip personnel with knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and adults safe. The audit team made the following key observations.

### OBSERVATIONS

- The Congregation recognises that specific roles within ministries require differing safeguarding training and differing support needs.
- The Congregation has a safeguarding training program (induction and refresher), which is documented, structured and comprehensive.

- Regular training focuses on safeguarding, including dimensions of the NCSS and other recognised safeguarding standards.
- The Sisters of the Good Samaritan are to be commended for the effectiveness of their training programs – interviews with personnel indicate a sound understanding of the requirements for safeguarding, including knowledge of the appropriate responses should a complaint or concern be raised.
- Safeguarding training is subject to review to ensure it maintains its currency, relevance, and meets the needs of changing safeguarding environments, post pandemic.

#### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT**

- The Congregation has identified and planned to provide formation on the updated Code of Practice and ‘Ways of Working’ policies and practices with personnel.

#### **NCSS Standard 8 – Safe physical and online environments**

Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded all seven indicators for this standard.

ACSL assessed how the Congregation addresses its responsibility to minimise opportunities for abuse to occur in both physical and online environments. Standard 8 requires the Congregation and its personnel to be proactive in recognising and mitigating safeguarding risks.

The core aspects of this responsibility are the Code of Conduct, the Safeguarding Policy, and the Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy, which outline appropriate supervision, oversight of, and behaviour towards children and adults at risk. The movement of ministry, and managing risks associated with third parties or contractors and the use of facilities by others are considered.

Safeguarding in the digital environment supports requirements of the Privacy Act (1998) and cyber security obligations for individuals and organisations.

The audit team made the following key observations.

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

- The Congregation has IT filters in place and all personnel utilise the Congregational domain name address to communicate with stakeholders and third parties.
- The Congregation provide IT support to their personnel.
- Physical environments have been risk assessed, and any identified mitigation strategies are being implemented.



## NCSS Standard 9 – Continuous improvement

Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded five of the five indicators relevant to this standard. One indicator is not relevant.

Standard 9 is focused on assessing how the Congregation is preparing to meet emerging safeguarding risks and the continuous review and improvement approaches that are in place, across its ministries and services. This Standard requires the Congregation to regularly review policies and procedures, testing how they are understood and implemented by personnel. It also requires the Congregation to review incidents and complaints to identify systemic safeguarding issues that may arise. External review mechanisms strengthen the organisation's safeguarding capabilities, support continuous improvement, and allow the learnings and good practice to be shared.

The audit team made the following key observations:

### OBSERVATIONS

- The Congregation has developed a series of safeguarding policies, procedures and processes that address children and adults at risk and implemented them across their ministries.
- The Congregation reviews these materials regularly and updated information where appropriate.

## NCSS Standard – 10 Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults

Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.

Based on the audit findings the Congregation has developed and embedded six of the six indicators for this standard.

Standard 10 determines that the safeguarding policies and procedures are well documented and managed. This ensures consistent application of safeguarding practices across the Congregation. The audit expects that safeguarding policies and procedures are publicly available, in formats that are easily understood. They should be developed and reviewed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. Safeguarding policies and procedures should be 'living' documents.

The audit team made the following key observations:

### OBSERVATIONS

- Key safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and operating effectively. The policies and procedures address legislation and the requirements of the NCSS. They are accessible to the public.
- The leaders champion and model best practices in safeguarding.
- Policies and documentation developed by the Congregation are distributed to Sisters and personnel and formation provided as required.
- There are processes in place to monitor and review the safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Personnel interviewed understand and appear to implement safeguarding policies and procedures.

## 5. Assessment of Compliance with NCSS indicators

Standard 1 Committed leadership, governance and culture					
<i>The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture</i>					
Criterion 1.1 – There is a public commitment to safeguarding that takes a zero tolerance approach to abuse.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.1.1	The Safeguarding Policy is approved and endorsed by the Church Authority and/or relevant leadership body and is publicly available.	✓			
1.1.2	The Safeguarding Commitment Statement is published, widely displayed, and made publicly available.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 1.2 - A culture of safeguarding children and adults is championed and modelled at all levels of the Church Authority from the top down and bottom up.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.2.1	A strong safeguarding culture is created and maintained by the Church Authority and leaders by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone.</li> <li>• emphasising that safeguarding children and adults is everyone's responsibility; and</li> <li>• actively monitoring safeguarding compliance and risk management.</li> </ul>	✓			
1.2.2	A Safeguarding Committee is appointed at the highest level of leadership to oversee the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies, and procedures.	✓			
1.2.3	A Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) is appointed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.	✓			
1.2.4	Personnel understand that good safeguarding practices are everyone's responsibility and are empowered to contribute to the organisation's safeguarding practices.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 1.3 - Governance arrangements facilitate the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy across the entity's activities.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.3.1	Governance arrangements are transparent and include safeguarding roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.	✓			
1.3.2	Where the Church Authority's governance includes countries other than Australia, the NCSS are applied wherever possible, considering cultural differences and local jurisdictional issues.		✓		

<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place inasmuch as governance is in place to ensure safeguarding roles, responsibilities and practices are accountable. In the ministries outside Australia, the Congregation is committed to embedding these practices in their operations. Refer <a href="#">recommendation #1</a> .					
<b>Criterion 1.4 – The entity’s Code of Conduct sets clear behavioural standards towards children and adults.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
1.4.1	The Code of Conduct is explicit and inclusive of all personnel and provides guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour.	✓			
1.4.2	The Code of Conduct is written in accessible language and communicated to personnel, children, families, and carers.	✓			
1.4.3	The Code of Conduct considers the needs of all children and adults at risk, paying particular attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations people.</li> <li>• individuals who are elderly, are living with disability, are suffering from an illness, or who are considered to be at risk of abuse’;</li> <li>• individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• children in out of home care, or are homeless; and,</li> <li>• children and adults of diverse sexuality.</li> </ul>	✓			
1.4.4	The Code of Conduct outlines the importance of considering how power imbalances can occur in ministries and services.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 1.5 - The entity’s risk management plan focuses on preventing, identifying, and mitigating safeguarding risks to children and adults.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
1.5.1	The Risk Management Plan considers the needs of children and adults with diminished capacity, and how and when adults at risk make informed choices (dignity of risk).	✓			
1.5.2	The Risk Management Plan incorporates procedures to assess, evaluate, review, and oversee safeguarding of children and adults at risk within its ministry and/or service.	✓			
1.5.3	There is a documented program to regularly identify, monitor, report, and review risks.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 1.6 - Personnel understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping for safeguarding and professional standards.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
1.6.1	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures are documented and communicated to personnel.	✓			
1.6.2	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures align with best practice.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Standard 2 Children and adults are safe, informed and participate					
<i>Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</i>					
Criterion 2.1 – Children and adults at risk engaged in an entity’s ministry and/or services are informed about their rights, including safety, decision making, participation and how a complaint will be managed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.1.1	Age-appropriate strategies are used to engaged children, seek their views about what makes them feel safe, and enable them to participate in decisions that affect them.	✓			
2.1.2	Adults at risk (or carers where appropriate) are engaged to provide their views about decisions which affect them, what makes them feel safe and to contribute to safeguarding approaches.		✓		
2.1.3	The organisation makes children and adults at risk aware of their rights, including their right to be safe from abuse, and who to contact if they are concerned about their safety or the safety of others.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
2.1.2 - The Congregation will continue to develop documents and processes to engage adults at risk. Refer <a href="#">recommendation #2</a> .					
Criterion 2.2 - The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and less isolated.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.2.1	Children are provided with age-appropriate information about safe and respectful peer relationships.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 2.3 - The importance of friendships and social connections for adults at risk is recognised and encouraged, helping them feel safe and less isolated.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.3.1	Adults at risk (or their carers where appropriate), are provided with information about safe and respectful relationships.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 2.4 – Where relevant to the setting or context, children and families are offered access to abuse prevention programs and related information that is age appropriate.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.4.1	Children and families are provided with information, access and/or referral to abuse prevention programs, appropriate to the child’s age, development, ability, and level of understanding.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Standard 3 Partnering with families, carers and communities					
<i>Families, carers and communities are informed and involved in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults.</i>					
Criterion 3.1 – Parents, carers and/or guardians participate in decisions affecting their child, or adults with diminished capacity.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.1.1	The entity encourages parents, carers and/or guardians to take an active role in monitoring the safety of those engaged in the ministry and/or service.	✓			
<b>Observations</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 3.2 – Families, carers and communities are engaged with and are provided information about the Church Authority’s approach to safeguarding.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.2.1	Families, carers and communities are encouraged to contribute to discussions about safeguarding approaches.	✓			
3.2.2	Safeguarding information is provided and widely available, including contact details of the Safeguarding Committee and/or Safeguarding Co-ordinators.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 3.3 - Families, carers and communities are informed about the Church Authority’s operations and governance; and have an opportunity to have a say in the safeguarding policies and practices.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.3.1	Processes are in place to engage families, carers and communities about their views on safeguarding policies and practices.	✓			
3.3.2	Families, carers and communities are aware of the roles and responsibilities of personnel providing ministries and/or services directly to children and adults at risk.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 3.4 – The entity raises community awareness of the dignity and rights of all children and adults		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.4.1	The entity promotes and/or participates in activities which raise awareness of abuse prevention and the rights and dignity of children and adults at risk.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Standard 4 Equity is promoted and diversity is respected					
<i>Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice</i>					
Criterion 4.1 - The diverse circumstances and backgrounds of children and adults at risk are acknowledged and accommodated by providing appropriate support.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
4.1.1	The Safeguarding Policy and procedures demonstrate an understanding, and awareness of the diverse circumstances and experiences that increase the risk of abuse.	✓			
4.1.2	The Complaints Handling Policy and practices address barriers that may prevent a disclosure of abuse being made and that hinders personnel from recognising and responding appropriately.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 4.2 – Children and adults have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that promote inclusion, are culturally safe, and accessible.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
4.2.1	Information about complaints processes and supports are provided in culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand formats.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 4.3 - The diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those living with disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and adults who are unable to live at home, and those of diverse sexuality, are acknowledged.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
4.3.1	The Safeguarding Policy and procedures empower children and adults by reflecting attitudes and behaviours that respect their inherent dignity, are inclusive and are responsive to diverse needs.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Standard 5 Robust human resource management					
<i>People working with children and adults at risk are suitable and supported to reflect safeguarding values in practice</i>					
Criterion 5.1 – A strong commitment to safeguarding underpins an entity’s recruitment.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.1.1	The commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance approach to abuse are explicit in advertising, screening, and recruitment for personnel.	✓			
5.1.2	Recruitment and screening procedures and processes are fully documented.	✓			
5.1.3	Positions are assessed for the expected level of contact with children/adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.2 – Personnel have current clearances (for example, working with children checks) and/or equivalent background checks relevant to their role.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.2.1	All personnel are required to have a background check or clearance (as relevant to their role).	✓			
5.2.2	As required by legislation, personnel must have a current working with children check (or working with vulnerable people check) and/or NDIS Worker Screening Check prior to working with children and adults at risk.	✓			
5.2.3	Records of all checks are maintained and monitored in accordance with legislation, for all personnel	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.3 - Personnel complete appropriate induction and are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities including reporting obligations.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.3.1	All personnel participate in a safeguarding induction program, which occurs as soon as possible after commencement.	✓			
5.3.2	All Church Authorities and their leadership team undertake the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.4 - Ongoing supervision and people management includes an emphasis on safeguarding responsibilities.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.4.1	Professional supervision, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.	✓			

<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.5 – Before and during seminary and religious formation, candidates are appropriately screened and supported, including processes for ongoing formation, support and supervision of clergy and religious.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.5.1	The Church Authority seeks professional support in screening candidates for seminary/formation programs and before ordination/profession of vows. This includes a responsibility to enquire if an applicant or candidate has previously withdrawn or been exited from another seminary or formation program.	✓			
5.5.2	Seminary and initial formation programs have robust screening processes for candidates for religious ministry, including external psychological and psychosexual assessments.	✓			
5.5.3	Ongoing integrated formation for clergy and religious addresses both the canonical and civil safeguarding requirements. For priests, this would include supporting their fidelity to the Church’s teaching regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the inviolability of the Sacramental Seal.	✓			
5.5.4	All clergy and religious in full-time ministry participate in at least 6 hours, with the optimum being 10 hours of professional/pastoral supervision each year. Clergy and religious not in full-time ministry participate in 6 hours of reflective practice activities each year.	✓			
5.5.5	All clergy and religious in ministry, undertake ongoing professional development and regular appraisals	✓			
5.5.6	All newly ordained clergy and newly professed religious are supported with a suitable mentor for at least five years post ordination or final profession.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.6 - The curriculum for seminary and formation programs for clergy and religious includes safeguarding knowledge and skills development of candidates to understand and lead initiatives for safeguarding children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.6.1	Seminary and initial formation programs build candidates’ knowledge and skills in a range of areas to support safeguarding children and adults.	✓			
5.6.2	Seminary and initial formation programs include developing pastoral responses to victims and survivors of abuse.	✓			
5.6.3	Seminary and initial formation programs identify how to avoid abuse of power and the development and/or reinforcement of clericalist attitudes and behaviours.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					



Criterion 5.7 – The movement and credentialing of those in active ministry is appropriately managed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.7.1	A system to assess the safeguarding credentials and manage the movement of all seminarians, clergy, religious and lay ministries between different seminaries, formation programs and other Church entities is in place.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 5.8 – Where clergy and religious from countries other than Australia are recruited to ministry, programs are in place to support their cultural awareness, screening, induction, professional supervision and development.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.8.1	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia recruited to ministry, are screened and verification information is sought from the international Church Authority.	N/A			
5.8.2	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia participate in a safeguarding induction program which is documented and occurs as soon as possible after commencement of ministry.	N/A			
5.8.3	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia are supported with a suitable mentor for at least the first two years of their time in Australia.	N/A			
<b>Observations:</b> N/A.					

<b>Standard 6 Effective complaints management</b>					
<i>Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities and personnel.</i>					
Criterion 6.1 - The entity's Complaints Handling Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, reporting obligations and record keeping requirements.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.1.1	Policies and procedures address mandatory reporting obligations.	✓			
6.1.2	There are clear procedures that provide step-by-step responses and action to be taken for different types of complaints, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>breaches of Code of Conduct.</li> <li>disclosures, allegations, or concerns of current abuse of a child.</li> <li>an adult bringing forward a complaint of abuse suffered as a child; and</li> <li>an adult bringing forward a complaint of current or past abuse experienced as an adult.</li> </ul>		✓		
6.1.3	The Complaint Handling Policy outlines how perceived or actual conflict of interests are managed.	✓			
6.1.4	The Complaint Handling Policy acknowledges that power imbalances exist between the complainant and respondent and has strategies in place to address this.	✓			

6.1.5	The Complaint Handling Policy spells out who has responsibilities in relation to handling complaints and when procedures are enacted.	✓			
6.1.6	All abuse complaints, incidents, allegations, disclosures, concerns and referral are recorded, and confidential information is stored, protected and retained according to the Privacy Act, and for 50 years.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
6.1.2 - Policy and procedure requirements of the indicators are in place. It could be useful to develop an easy-to-read flow chart of the process a person would undertake if they wanted to make a complaint. Refer <a href="#">recommendation #3</a> .					
Criterion 6.2 - The Complaint Handling Policy is understood by children, adults, families, carers, and personnel, and focuses on the rights of children and adults at risk.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.2.1	The Complaint Handling Policy and procedures demonstrate how the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk are prioritised.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 6.3 - Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.3.1	The Complaints Handling Policy is aligned, and operates in conjunction, with the Code of Conduct, HR and other policies.	✓			
6.3.2	The Complaints Handling Policy commits to an initial risk assessment if a complaint of abuse is received, to identify and minimise any risk to children or adults. Ongoing risk assessments are conducted throughout investigation processes.	✓			
6.3.3	Complainants are responded to promptly and kept informed as to the progress of dealing with their complaint.	✓			
6.3.4	Trauma-informed and victim-centred support and care is offered to any child or adult who has experienced abuse.	✓			
6.3.5	Sharing information relating to complaints adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles and relevant legislation.	✓			
6.3.6	The Complaints Handling Policy and procedures empower and support personnel to raise, in good faith, concerns and allegations about unacceptable behaviour towards children and adults by other personnel.	✓			
6.3.7	Where a complaint related to the sexual abuse of a child or adult against clergy or religious is substantiated under a civil standard, the Church Authority undertakes a risk management process to determine the appropriate action, in keeping with Church protocols.	✓			
6.3.8	Where a clergy or religious is convicted of a canonical offence relating to child sexual abuse, the respondent is to be prohibited from the exercise of ministry until such times as the process for imposing a penalty is completed by the relevant dicastery.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					

Criterion 6.4 - The Complaints Handling Policy includes the process of reporting complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, requiring cooperation with any statutory or contractual processes.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.4.1	The Complaints Handling Policy requires that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concerns and complaints of child abuse occurring within the entity be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities, in accordance with regulations.</li> <li>any concerns and/or complaints of a criminal against adults be reported to statutory authorities; and</li> <li>personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.</li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 6.5 – The Church Authority ensures mechanisms are in place to support complainants of child and adult sexual abuse.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.5.1	Appropriate pastoral care is provided to complainants.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 6.6 - The Church Authority ensures respondents facing allegations are supported and monitored.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.6.1	Appropriately trained personnel engaged in consultation with the respondents to counsel and represent the pastoral needs of the respondent.	✓			
6.6.2	Arrangements are in place to monitor, supervise and support a respondent, where there is a complaint, until (and if) the Church Authority no longer has this responsibility.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					

## Standard 7 Ongoing education and training

*Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and adults safe through information, ongoing education and training.*

Criterion 7.1 - Personnel are trained and supported to implement the safeguarding policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.1.1	Personnel are provided regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures.	✓			
7.1.2	The entity's induction and refresher Safeguarding of Children and Adults training must as a minimum cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code of Conduct.</li> <li>safeguarding risk management.</li> <li>Safeguarding Policy and procedures.</li> <li>Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.</li> <li>reporting obligations; and</li> <li>e-safety training.</li> </ul>	✓			

7.1.3	Records are maintained to ensure all personnel attend induction training and participate in refresher safeguarding training at least every three years.	✓			
7.1.4	All personnel with specific safeguarding responsibilities receive ongoing support and professional development to their role.		✓		
<b>Observations:</b>					
7.1.4 - The Congregation plan to continue to provide formation on the updated Code of Practice and sessions on 'Ways of Working' with personnel. Refer <a href="#">recommendation #4</a> .					
<b>Criterion 7.2 - Personnel are supported to recognise the nature and indicators of child abuse, including harmful behaviours by a child towards another child.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
7.2.1	Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place children at risk of abuse, building knowledge to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the nature and impact of child abuse.</li> <li>• understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse.</li> <li>• identify risk factors, such as grooming behaviours; and</li> <li>• understand, identify, and respond to abusive behaviours by a child towards another child.</li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.3 – Personnel are supported to recognise the factors that contribute to adult abuse, with a focus on adults at risk.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
7.3.1	Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse, building knowledge to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the nature and impact of adult abuse.</li> <li>• understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse.</li> <li>• identify risk factors, such as abuse of power, and exploitation.</li> <li>• recognise how adults and institutions can be groomed, including power imbalances can be exploited; and</li> <li>• understand what could make specific adults at increased risk of abuse.</li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.4 - Personnel have the information and skills to respond effectively to safeguarding risks, concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
7.4.1	Education and training programs equip relevant personnel to appropriately respond to and support anyone bringing forward concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.	✓			
7.4.2	Personnel receive training on information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures.	✓			
7.4.3	Personnel receive training on reporting obligations under Commonwealth/State/Territory legislative and canon law, which includes:	✓			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reporting suspected criminal behaviour to police.</li> <li>mandatory reporting to child protection authorities.</li> <li>Reportable Conduct Scheme.</li> <li>reporting to other regulatory authorities or government departments; and</li> <li>Canonical reporting requirements.</li> </ul>				
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Criterion 7.5 - Personnel receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.5.1	Cultural safety training is provided to equip personnel to create, culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	✓			
7.5.2	Training is provided to relevant personnel to equip them with the knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and how to create safe environments for people from these groups.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

**Standard 8 Safe physical and online environments**

*Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.*

Criterion 8.1 – The Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy addresses both physical and online risks, without compromising the individual’s right to privacy or wellbeing.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.1.1	<p>Both physical and online risks are addressed within the provision of ministry and/or services including risks arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child;</li> <li>ministries and/or services such as counselling, home visits, outreach, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction and mentoring;</li> <li>potential physical contact between the penitent and the confessor where the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated;</li> <li>one-to-one interaction with adults at risk;</li> <li>child-to-child interactions.</li> <li>adult-to-child interactions;</li> <li>adult-to-adult interactions (with consideration to power imbalances); and</li> <li>the nature of physical spaces.</li> </ul> <p>Wherever possible, these interactions are conducted in an open or visible space, or within clear line of sight of another adult.</p>	✓			
8.1.2	The entity’s policies require the safe use of online applications for children and adults to learn, communicate and seek help.	✓			
8.1.3	Personnel are involved in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks to children and adults.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 8.2 - The online environment is used in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding policy.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.2.1	Personnel access and use online environments in line with the entity's Code of Conduct, Privacy Act and relevant communication protocols.	✓			
8.2.2	The online environment is monitored, and breaches are managed in accordance with disciplinary, or other relevant policies and reported to the leadership.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 8.3 - Risk management plans address the range of settings, activities, and physical environments in which ministry and/or service occur.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.3.1	A process is in place to assess and manage risk if the organisation becomes aware of the presence of someone who poses an unacceptable risk to others within their ministry and/or service.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 8.4 – Where facilities and services are contracted to and from third parties, contractual arrangements specify safeguarding considerations.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.4.1	If a third party provides services or uses the organisations facilities appropriate safeguarding policies and practices are in place.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

## Standard 9 Continuous improvement

*Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.*

Criterion 9.1 - The safeguarding practices for the protection of children and adults at risk are regularly reviewed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.1.1	The Safeguarding Implementation Plan outlines how safeguarding practices are monitored and reviewed, and how this information is reported.	✓			
9.1.2	The Church Authority monitors the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and co-ordinates annual local self-assessment checks.	✓			
9.1.3	The Safeguarding Policy is subject to review at least every three years and outcomes of this review are documented.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 9.2 – Concerns and complaints are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures in safeguarding practices.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.2.1	All individual incidents or complaints relating to safeguarding practices and/or failures are considered by the leadership to identify systemic patterns and support continuous improvement.	✓			

**Observations**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 9.3 - The Church Authority reports on the findings of its safeguarding reviews.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.3.1	The findings of relevant reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices to are reported to stakeholders.	✓			
9.3.2	The findings of audits or reviews undertaken or validated by ACSL are made public.	Not applicable – this is the first audit by ACSL			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

**Standard 10 Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults**  
*Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.*

Criterion 10.1 - Policies and procedures address the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.1.1	All relevant policies and procedures reference appropriate safeguarding approaches, requirements and responsibilities.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 10.2 - Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.2.1	The policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding are readily available and accessible to all personnel.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 10.3 - Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development and review of policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.3.1	There are processes in place to monitor how safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.	✓			
10.3.2	There is a process in place to develop and review safeguarding policies and procedures.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 10.4 - Church leaders champion and model best practice implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.4.1	The Church Authority and leaders promote the NCSS and enact all policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.

Criterion 10.5 - Personnel understand and implement the policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.5.1	Personnel are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and practical implementation of policies and procedures and provide feedback.	✓			

**Observations:**  
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.



## 6. Detailed findings



### Standard 1: Committed leadership, governance and culture

*The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture.*

Recommendation #1		Priority 3
1.3.2	Where the Church Authority's governance includes countries other than Australia, the NCSS are applied wherever possible, considering cultural differences and local jurisdictional issues.	
Details of finding	Governance is in place to ensure safeguarding roles, responsibilities and practices are accountable. In the ministries outside Australia, the Congregation is committed to embedding these practices in their operations. The Congregation has undertaken reviews by external consultants of their ministries outside Australia in Philippines and Kiribati. They have invested considerable resources into supporting these ministries to implement a safeguarding culture. The discussion between ACSL, Australian and locally based Good Samaritan Sisters reveals an emphasis on implementing culturally appropriate safeguarding processes and this is continuous process.	
Recommendation	The congregation will continue to resource and deliver relevant formation in safeguarding in their ministries outside Australia which will be contextualised to local cultures.	
Agreed Action	Agreed	
Responsibility	Safeguarding Coordinators Kiribati and the Philippines and the Superior and Council of the Superior.	
Due date	30 June 2025	



### Standard 2: Children and adults are safe, informed and participate

*Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously*

Recommendation #2		Priority 2
2.1.2	Adults at risk (or carers where appropriate) are engaged to provide their views about decisions which affect them, what makes them feel safe and to contribute to safeguarding approaches.	
Details of finding	The Congregation has identified it needs to continue to implement strategies to engage teams and Sisters who are receiving services.	
Recommendation	The Congregation continue to develop documents and processes to engage adults at risk.	
Agreed Action	Agreed	
Responsibility	Safeguarding Coordinator, Australia	
Due date	30 June 2025	



## Standard 6: Effective complaints management

*Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities, and personnel*

Recommendation #3		Priority 2
6.1.2	<p>There are clear procedures that provide step-by-step guidance on the response and action to be taken for different types of complaints, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• breaches of Codes of Conduct;</li> <li>• disclosures, allegations, or concerns of current abuse of a child;</li> <li>• an adult bringing forward a complaint of abuse suffered as a child; and</li> <li>• an adult bringing forward a complaint of current or past abuse experienced as an adult.</li> </ul>	
Details of finding	Policy and procedure requirements of the indicators are in place. It could be useful to develop an easy-to-read flow chart of the process a person would undertake if they wanted to make a complaint.	
Recommendation	Revise the complaints script, ensure it is visible on all desks, and provide refresher training to all relevant personnel.	
Agreed Action	Agreed	
Responsibility	Director of Operations	
Due date	30 March 2025	



## Standard 7: Ongoing education and training

*Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and adults safe through information, ongoing education and training*

Recommendation #4		Priority 2
7.1.4	All personnel with specific safeguarding responsibilities receive ongoing support and professional development relevant to their role	
Details of finding	The Congregation has planned to continue to provide further formation on the updated Code of Practice and sessions on 'Ways of Working' with personnel.	
Recommendation	The Congregation continue to provide formation to personnel on their 'Code of Practice' as it has been updated and on 'Ways of Working' policies and practices.	
Agreed Action	Agreed	
Responsibility	Professional Standards Adviser, Safeguarding Coordinators, Australia, Kiribati and the Philippines and Oblate Leadership Team.	
Due date	30 November 2025	

# Appendix A

## COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT SCALE

Rate your entity’s compliance against each indicator using this four-point scale:

	General	Processes & Systems	People & Resources
Yet to Develop	As an entity we are unable to demonstrate that the requirements of the indicator are in place and will implement the necessary strategies developed through the Standards Action Plan.	Processes may be in place however the specific requirements of the indicator have not been addressed. The actions generated through the Standards Action Plan will be implemented.	At an entity level resources have yet to be assigned. The people and resources will be determined and allocated in the Standards Action Plan.
Developing	Our entity has begun to address the requirements of the indicator, however processes are developing and not universally applied.	Some relevant processes have been implemented which align with the requirements of the indicator, however they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• siloed; and/or</li> <li>• undocumented; and/or</li> <li>• inconsistent; and/or</li> <li>• lack clarity.</li> </ul>	Personnel capabilities vary across the entity and resources and responsibility are not formally assigned. This will be addressed in the Standards Action Plan.
Developed	Our entity is addressing the indicator and is in the process of implementing its requirements. The gaps will be highlighted and addressed through the Standards Action Plan.	Relevant processes and systems have been defined and developed but are yet to be implemented across the full operations of the entity. A plan is being developed to fully implement processes and systems.	Resources have been assigned and responsibilities defined, however there is no formal training or communication of standard procedures, and it is unlikely that deviations will be detected. This will be remediated through the Standards Action Plan.
Developed and embedded	The entity can demonstrate that indicator requirements are formally embedded. Processes are operating effectively, and opportunities provided for continuous improvement.	Relevant processes are integrated and coordinated, including remote operations and reviews/audits of activities.	Personnel are trained to detect and report on deviations or break downs in processes. Resources have been assigned to monitor and address requirements.

# Appendix B

## AUDIT FINDING PRIORITIES

The following priority ratings have been used to assess findings arising from this audit:

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
<p>Gaps or control weaknesses have been identified resulting in non-compliance with the indicator.</p> <p>Mitigation actions are required to be developed and initiated as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days from the issuance of this report, with expected resolution within 3 months.</p>	<p>Progress has been made with respect to implementation of the required indicator, however full compliance is yet to be achieved.</p> <p>Mitigation actions are required to be developed and initiated within 3 months or earlier from the issuance of this report, with expected resolution within 6-9 months.</p>	<p>Issues have been identified which represent minor procedural weaknesses or improvement opportunities with respect to the operation of the indicator.</p> <p>Expected resolution is within 12 months or earlier from the issuance of this report.</p>

## Appendix C

### GLOSSARY

The definitions of terms used in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards take into account Australian State, Territory and federal laws and relevant regulations, canon law, information from the Holy See, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse published by the United Nations in 2017.

The glossary does not have any legal force and is meant only to serve as a reference tool for the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. All terms and definitions are to be read in the context of these Standards alone.

<b>Abuse</b>	when used throughout the NCSS document this is an inclusive term covering both child and adult abuse
<b>Abuse of Power</b>	means the abuse of position, function, or duty to take advantage of another. This can take many forms and include situations where a person has power over another person by virtue of their relationship (e.g., employer and employee, teacher and student, coach and athlete, parent or guardian and child, clergy/religious and parishioner) and uses that power to their advantage.
<b>Accessible language</b>	means information is provided in multiple formats for individuals with different levels of English literacy and proficiency, modes of communication, languages, and cognitive abilities.
<b>Adult</b>	means any person 18 years or older. When used throughout the NCSS document this is an inclusive term referring to all adults, including adults at risk.
<b>Adult abuse</b>	<p>means the improper treatment of a person that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, neglect, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, exploitation, or other types of aggression.</p> <p>There are several categories of abuse of adults, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual abuse*</li> <li>• Physical abuse*</li> <li>• Emotional/psychological abuse*</li> <li>• Neglect*</li> <li>• Elder abuse*</li> <li>• Financial abuse*</li> <li>• Exploitation*</li> </ul> <p>Within the context of the Catholic church and faith-based entities, it is also important to recognise spiritual abuse* as an additional subtype of abuse.</p>
<b>Adult at risk</b>	means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who are elderly.</li> <li>• with a disability.</li> <li>• who suffer from mental illness.</li> <li>• who have diminished capacity.</li> <li>• who have cognitive impairment.</li> <li>• who have suffered previous abuse.</li> <li>• who are experiencing transient risks.</li> <li>• who in receiving a ministry or service are subject to a power imbalance.</li> <li>• who are from a culturally or linguistically diverse background/</li> <li>• who are of diverse sexuality/</li> <li>• who have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Allegation</b>	means a complaint, still to be verified, claiming, or asserting that someone has committed an act of abuse against a child or adult. The term is used interchangeably and in combination with “complaint”.
<b>Audit</b>	means a mechanism to assess how a Church Authority, ministry or entity governed by a Church Authority, is implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.
<b>Australian Catholic Bishops Conference</b>	means the assembly of Bishops of Australia exercising together certain pastoral offices for the Catholics of Australia.
<b>Bishop</b>	means a diocesan bishop or archbishop, the ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of the Eastern Churches
<b>Canon law</b>	means the revised code of canon law promulgated by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in 1983 and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches as promulgated in 1990 and any other universal or legislation promulgated by the competent ecclesiastical authority.
<b>Canonical Offence</b>	<p>means canonical crimes<sup>1</sup> of sexual abuse committed by clerics and religious are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forcing someone, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts.</li> <li>• performing sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person.</li> <li>• the production, exhibition, possession, or distribution, including by electronic means, of child pornography, as well as by the recruitment of or inducement of a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions.</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup> The canonical crimes/delicts/offences committed by clerics or religious as stated in Art. 1 §1 a) of <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i>.  <sup>2</sup> Definition of vulnerable person as stated in Art. 1 §2 b) of <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i>: “means: any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence”. This definition is captured by the term ‘Adult at risk’ within the NCSS.</p>
<b>Catholic Religious Australia</b>	CRA is the conference of major superiors comprising leaders of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life within the Catholic Church in Australia.

<b>Certification</b>	means the act of giving official authority or approval and certification of the implementation of the NCSS and permission to use the ACSL Certification symbol.
<b>Child/ren</b>	means individuals under 18 years of age.
<b>Child abuse</b>	<p>There are different legal definitions of child abuse in Australia. Definition sourced from the Australian Institute of Family Studies: <a href="https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect">https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect</a></p> <p>Child abuse refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm to a child. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission.</p> <p>Child abuse and neglect is commonly divided into five subtypes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• emotional/psychological abuse</li> <li>• neglect</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• exposure to family violence</li> </ul>
<b>Church Authority</b>	<p>means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a diocesan bishop or archbishop, an ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of an eparchy of an Eastern Church.</li> <li>• the competent authority, howsoever titled, exercising the ministry of governance for religious institutes in Australia in accordance with their Constitutions; or</li> <li>• for ministerial PJPS the competent authority in accordance with the statutes.</li> <li>• for any other Church entity, the senior authority within the organization in accordance with its rules.</li> </ul>
<b>Church Protocols</b>	means official procedures or system of rules which govern the affairs of the Catholic Church in Australia, for example, Vos Estis Lux Mundi and the National Response Protocol.
<b>Civil Standard</b>	the most common standard of proof relates to civil proceedings, which is the balance of probabilities (incorporating the principles from Briginshaw v Briginshaw) – which means it is more probable than not that what the person says happened is true (in criminal cases, the standard is proof beyond reasonable doubt).
<b>Clergy</b>	includes bishops, priests and deacons.
<b>Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia</b>	means any cleric or member of a religious institute who is specifically recruited or welcomed from overseas by a Church Authority or entity.
<b>Cleric</b>	a member of the clergy.
<b>Clericalist/ism</b>	means an attitude toward clergy/religious characterised by an excessive deference and an assumption of their moral superiority. Pope Francis has said that it occurs when “clerics feel they are superior, [and when] they are far from the people.” It can be “fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons”.

<b>Cognitive impairment</b>	<p>means when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect their everyday life, because of their condition. Some causes of long-term or permanent cognitive impairment include dementia, stroke, or brain injury.</p> <p>For further information see:  <a href="https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment">https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment</a></p>
<b>Complainant</b>	<p>means any person who makes a complaint that may include any allegation, suspicion, concern, or report of a breach of the entity’s Code of Conduct. A complaint may also include disclosures made to an institution that may be about, or relate to, abuse in the entity’s context.</p>
<b>Conflicts of interest</b>	<p>means situations (perceived or actual) where a conflict arises between a person’s official duties and their private interests, which could influence the performance of those official duties. Such conflict generally involves opposing principles or incompatible wishes or needs and may occur when personnel function in multiple roles.</p>
<b>Consecrated Life/Institute of Consecrated Life</b>	<p>is an association of faithful in the Catholic Church erected by canon law whose members profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience by vows or other sacred bonds (as defined in the Code of Canon Law under canons 573–730).</p> <p>Apart from being a member of an institute, consecrated life may also be lived individually; the Catholic Church recognises, as forms of individual consecrated life that are not members of institutes, namely that of hermits and consecrated virgins.</p>
<b>Cultural safety</b>	<p>means an environment that is safe for people of all ethnicities and cultural identities: where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.</p>
<b>Dicastery</b>	<p>means a department of the Roman Curia.</p>
<b>Dignity or Right to Risk</b>	<p>refers to enabling individuals the right (or dignity) to take reasonable risks. It recognises that restricting this right can stifle the individual’s growth, self-esteem and the overall quality of life:</p> <p>‘Given that an individual’s personal dignity is manifested, in part, by their ability to remain autonomous, and being autonomous engenders risk-taking. Inhibiting an individual’s ability to take risks erodes their dignity. Dignity of risk is therefore the principle of allowing an individual the dignity afforded by risk-taking, subsequently enhancing their personal growth and quality of life.’</p> <p>(Joseph E Ibrahim and Marie-Claire Davis, ‘Impediments to Applying the “Dignity of Risk” Principle in Residential Aged Care Services: “Dignity of Risk” in Residential Aged Care’, <i>Australasian Journal on Ageing</i> 32, no. 3 (September 2013): 188–93)</p>
<b>Diminished capacity</b>	<p>means if an adult needs to make a decision and is unable to carry out any part of this process (as listed below), they have impaired decision-making capacity.</p> <p>There are three elements to making a decision:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding the nature and effect of the decision;</li> <li>• freely and voluntarily deciding; and</li> <li>• communicating the decision in some way.</li> </ul>
<b>Congregation</b>	means a Archdiocese, archdiocese, ordinariate or personal prelatore of the Latin Church and an eparchy of an Eastern Church.
<b>Disability (persons with)</b>	means those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Article 2, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.)
<b>Diversity</b>	means a range of people who have various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experience, and interests.
<b>Diverse sexuality</b>	refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations, and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality.
<b>Elder abuse</b>	means a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.
<b>Emotional abuse (adults)</b>	is a common form of abuse that occurs in close relationships. Emotional abuse is defined as abuse that occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour, with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear, through manipulation, isolation, or intimidation.
<b>Emotional abuse (children)</b>	Emotional abuse of children refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child's self-esteem or social competence.
<b>Entity</b>	means a Archdiocese, religious institute, ministerial PJP (including their agencies) or association recognised as Catholic in accord with canon law.
<b>Exploitation</b>	is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.
<b>Exposure to family violence</b>	is generally considered to be a form of psychologically abusive behaviour, where a child is present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse, or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.
<b>Financial abuse</b>	involves the illegal or improper use or mismanagement of a person's money, property or resources. Stealing, fraud, forgery, embezzlement, forced changes to a will, inappropriate removal of a resident's decision-making powers and misuse of power of attorney are all forms of financial abuse or exploitation.
<b>Formation/program</b>	means a program preparing individuals for ordination or profession of vows and a life-long journey to the invitation of Christ to proclaim and live the Gospel message, within the life of the Church.

<b>Good Standing</b>	A person in good standing is regarded as having complied with all their safeguarding obligations, and is not subject to any form of allegation, disciplinary process, sanction suspension.
<b>Grooming (child)</b>	refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive.
<b>Grooming (adult)</b>	is the predatory act of manoeuvring another individual into a position that makes them more isolated, dependent, likely to trust, and more vulnerable to abusive behaviour.
<b>Guardian</b>	refers to the person(s) who has the legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of another person.
<b>Institutional abuse</b>	means abuse or poor care within an institution or specific care setting. Possible causes of institutional abuse include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a "closed" culture within an organisation where transparency is discouraged.</li> <li>• lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service.</li> <li>• failure to properly check the backgrounds and interview staff.</li> <li>• inadequate training.</li> <li>• lack of safeguarding policies and procedures.</li> <li>• lack of support of staff by management.</li> <li>• poor supervision; and</li> <li>• poor standards of care.</li> </ul>
<b>Lay/lay person</b>	means members of the Catholic Church and Church personnel other than bishops, priests, deacons and religious.
<b>Leaders</b>	means personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within a Church entity and/or who lead and coordinate Church improvement initiatives.
<b>Mentor</b>	means an experienced and trusted advisor or a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period.
<b>Ministerial PJP</b>	means a legal entity which is constituted a public juridic person in canon law and carries on its mission in the name of the Church, in accordance with its statutes approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority.
<b>Ministry</b>	means any activity within, or conducted by, an entity, that is authorised by formal appointment and designed to carry out the apostolic and charitable works of the Catholic Church.
<b>NDIS Worker Screening Check</b>	The NDIS Worker Screening Check is an assessment of whether a person who works, or seeks to work, with people with disability poses a risk to them. The assessment determines whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability. For further information see <a href="https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/ndis-worker-screening-check">https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/ndis-worker-screening-check</a>
<b>Neglect (adult)</b>	is the failure of a carer to provide the necessities of life to a person for whom they are caring.
<b>Neglect (child)</b>	refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide

	adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
<b>Offender</b>	means a person who has admitted abuse or whose responsibility for abuse has been determined by a court of law (criminal or civil), statutory or Church procedure.
<b>Organisation</b>	means a ministry and/or service operating under the governance of a recognised authority (such as a legal entity) and/or a Church Authority.
<b>Pastoral care</b>	means when one person has responsibility for the wellbeing of another or for a faith community. It includes the provision of spiritual advice and support, education, counselling, medical care, and assistance in times of need. All work involving the supervision or education of children and young people is a work of pastoral care.
<b>Personnel (Church personnel)</b>	means a cleric, religious or other person who is employed by the entity or engaged on a contract, subcontract, voluntary or unpaid basis.
<b>Physical abuse</b>	is a non-accidental physically aggressive act which results in physical pain or injury, and which may include physical coercion and physical restraint. Physical abuse may be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment.
<b>Professional/pastoral supervision</b>	means a professional activity in which personnel are engaged in reflection and learning, under the guidance of a supervisor. Supervision assists personnel in their accountabilities for professional standards, defined competencies for their role and understanding and implementation of organisational policy and procedures. For clerics and religious, professional supervision assists in the maintenance of boundaries of the pastoral relationship and enhances the quality of their ministry.
<b>Protective behaviours program</b>	Is a type of abuse prevention program and means an age-appropriate structured education program to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge to enhance their personal safety.
<b>Reflective practice</b>	is a professional development technique that involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice. It is expected to be a continuous process, whereby an individual explores an experience to identify what happened and what their role in this experience was, including behaviour, thinking, and related emotions. Reflective practice enables potential changes in approaches to similar future events to be identified, with the aim of improved performance.
<b>Religious institute</b>	means an entity within the Catholic Church whose members commit themselves through religious vows to lead a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Societies of apostolic life resemble religious institutes in that their members also live a life in common. They do not take religious vows but live out the apostolic purpose of the group. In these Standards, the term 'religious institutes' is used to include religious institutes, societies of apostolic life and secular institutes.
<b>Religious</b>	means a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life.
<b>Respondent</b>	means a person against whom a complaint is made.

<b>Review</b>	means an internal self-assessment of an entity's implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. A review can also be an assessment that forms part of the process of continuous improvement which occurs when following up recommendations made during an audit.
<b>Risk-based audit and Review Framework</b>	means a framework for assessing the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards that reflects a proportionate response based on the risk profile of the Church Authority.
<b>Risk Profile</b>	means an assessment against key safeguarding risk factors.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	refers to proactive measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals. These measures allow children, young people and adults to live free from abuse, harm and neglect. Within the life of the Church, safeguarding includes pastoral, liturgical and spiritual responses through engagement in the Sacraments and the life of the Church.
<b>Safeguarding Committee</b>	means a committee established to advise and support the Church Authority on all matters relating to safeguarding, including the development and implementation of a Safeguarding Implementation Plan and coordinating annual self-audits at a local level. Committee members need relevant and varied professional expertise in relation to safeguarding, child protection, organisational culture and structure, policy development, etc. and include lay women and men.
<b>Safeguarding Culture</b>	means embedding safeguarding into everything an organisation does. In promoting this culture, young people and adults at risk will understand they will be listened to, supported, and known action will be taken on their behalf.
<b>Safeguarding Commitment Statement</b>	means a Commitment Statement describing an entity's commitment to keep children and adults safe from harm. It informs the entity's safeguarding culture.
<b>Safeguarding Co-ordinator</b>	means an individual who champions safeguarding and co-ordinates the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within an entity.
<b>Safeguarding Implementation Plan</b>	means a documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the entity to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. It includes actions, strategies, responsibilities, delegations, and accountabilities, and tracks review and progress. It is overseen by the Safeguarding Committee.
<b>Safeguarding policies and procedures</b>	means any policies or procedures of the entity that address elements of safeguarding children and adults. For example, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recruitment.</li> <li>• risk management.</li> <li>• complaint handling; and</li> <li>• acceptable use of online applications.</li> </ul>
<b>Seminarian</b>	a student in a theological formation and education centre preparing for ordination as a priest.
<b>Seminary</b>	means a centre for the formation and education of students preparing for ordination.

<b>Sexual abuse (adult)</b>	Sexual abuse is a form of sexual assault. Sexual abuse includes rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment, and sexual interference. Sexual activity with an adult who is incapacitated by a mental or physical condition (such as dementia) that impairs his or her ability to grant informed consent, is defined as sexual assault/abuse. Sexual assault/abuse includes where through force, threats or abuse of authority, an individual commits a canonical offence or forces someone to perform or submit to sexual acts. Sexual assault is a crime.
<b>Sexual abuse (child)</b>	refers to exposing a child to any form of sexual activity. This may or may not involve physical contact. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.
<b>Spiritual abuse</b>	means abuse of a person that invokes a person's religious beliefs and faith to perpetrate harm. Spiritual abuse can occur as a secondary experience of abuse when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of spiritual authority and trust within the Church a
<b>Substantiated complaint</b>	means under the civil standard of proof an allegation of abuse for which the investigator finds that sufficient evidence exists to believe that the alleged conduct more likely than not occurred.
<b>Third parties</b>	means any individual, group or legal entity outside the Church entity who contract services and facilities to or from the Church entity.
<b>Transient Risk</b>	means short-term risk, experienced by people at different stages in their life: e.g. when someone is vulnerable due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grief</li> <li>• bereavement</li> <li>• relationship breakdown</li> <li>• homelessness</li> <li>• unemployment</li> <li>• financial hardship</li> </ul>
<b>Trauma-informed and victim-centred support</b>	is a strengths-based framework which is founded on five core principles – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Trauma-informed services do no harm: they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible. In trauma-informed services, trauma survivors are seen as unique individuals who have managed their responses to the experiences as best that they could.
<b>Validation</b>	means an assessment by ACSL of any self-assessment, review or audit, undertaken to achieve ACSL Certification status.
<b>Working With Children Check</b>	means generic term used in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards to denote the statutory screening requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. There is not yet a single national framework setting out requirements for 'working with children' checks. Each State/Territory in Australia has its own system. They are one part of a Church entity's recruitment, selection, and screening practices.
<b>Working with Vulnerable People Check</b>	means the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 in the Australian Capital Territory which requires those

working with children (and other vulnerable groups) to complete a Working with Vulnerable People Check and be registered before they can commence employment.

Tasmania has a 'Working with Vulnerable People Check' which requires all employees and volunteers aged 16 and over working in childcare services or other child-related services to apply for a WWVP check.

To date, only the ACT and Tasmania have this requirement.