



CSSA PAYS TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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Catholic Social Service Australia chair Francis Sullivan says departing CEO Ursula Stephens has guided the organisation admirably through a period of change, and will be sorely missed as she takes up a new role.

Dr Stephens has today been announced as the new CEO of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited, the company established in December 2020 to oversee safeguarding, child protection and professional standards matters for the Church in Australia.

Mr Sullivan said while he and other members of the CSSA board were disappointed that Dr Stephens will be leaving the organisation, they are comforted by the fact she will continue to be serving Catholic social services agencies and other Church ministries in her new position.

“The work of safeguarding and responding with compassion to the abuse of children and vulnerable adults is critical work for every part of the Catholic Church,” he said.

“Many Catholic social service agencies are at the coalface of working with people who are vulnerable, including victims and survivors of abuse. Ursula’s leadership and direction will therefore continue to impact the work of CSSA’s members, albeit in a new way.”

Mr Sullivan, who as CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council guided the Church’s engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, said Dr Stephens understands the significance of the role she will soon undertake.

“The Church continues to prioritise its work in safeguarding and professional standards. Ursula’s vast experience across a range of fields will be a great asset for the Church and its ministries,” he said.

Dr Stephens said she is looking forward to her new challenge.

“I am grateful to the board of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited and the company’s members for putting their trust in me to help its work evolve in this new structure,” she said.

“I will miss the wonderful people who serve the poor and marginalised, but I’m pleased to know that I will continue to work within the Catholic Church, work closely with CSSA members and continue to work with an eye on supporting those in need – including victims and survivors.”

Mr Sullivan said Dr Stephens has continued to maintain the high profile of CSSA in her time as CEO, and also guided it through a time of transition.

“Through our incorporation and the change of board chair, Ursula has provided calm and highly competent leadership and support that has served our network extremely well,” he said.

Mr Sullivan said the CSSA board will meet next week to commence the process of identifying a new CEO.

“Catholic Social Services Australia has been fortunate to have a succession of high-calibre chief executive officers, of which Ursula is the most recent,” he said.

“We look forward to announcing a successor in due course. We are confident it will be someone who is similarly gifted and committed to our important work.”

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