

## - MEDIA RELEASE -

### Safety of children and adults at risk in focus for Congregation of Mary Queen of Peace

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A safeguarding audit of Canberra-based Congregation of Mary Queen of Peace has found policies and procedures to keep children and adults at risk safe are developed and in place throughout the entity's Australian operations.

The audit report, prepared by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) and published today, assessed the Congregation's implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), a framework for the safety of children and adults in Catholic entities. The audit found that 100 per cent of the indicators relevant to the Congregation were either fully embedded or substantially implemented at the time of the NCSS audit.

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens said that while the Congregation's work in Australia is administratively focused and involves only incidental contact with children and adults at risk, the Congregation still has significant safeguarding responsibilities throughout their presence in Australia.

'The Congregation of Mary Queen of Peace's primary mission is based in Vietnam, and their work is to carry out the Church's mission amongst children with disabilities and with the ethnic minorities of the Highlands of Viet Nam.'

'The Sisters have a presence in the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn through their religious house that allows them to connect with the local community and also serves a place for the sisters from Vietnam to come to Canberra for a period of study or work experience, after which they return to work in the Diocese of Ban Me Thuot in Vietnam.'

'To scope the audit of the Congregation we used ACSL's risk-based framework to target our assessment. This enabled us to identify relevant current and emerging risks for the Sisters' operations in Australia.'

'The Congregation provided safeguarding documentation to us through the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal, which ACSL has developed. After reviewing their responses to the self-assessment we were able to conduct focused and relevant interviews and discussions with members.'

'While we can confirm that the NCSS have been addressed within the Congregation's own safeguarding framework, we identified several areas where there is more that can be done.'

'A total of five recommendations to enhance safeguarding practice have been provided to the Congregation. Each recommendation has been accepted by the Congregation, and they will now have a period of 12 months to implement the recommendations,' Dr Stephens said.

The audit report of the Congregation is available through the Publications and Reports area of [ACSL's website](#).

*ACSL's risk-based audit and review framework works to assess practical safeguarding risks for individual entities. The framework, centred on the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), considers the mission activity of the entity, the context in which it operates, and its current membership. This means that entities who undergo a self-assessment, review or audit are assessed against the NCSS criteria and indicators that directly relate to them. Entities commit to a three-year cycle for review/audit to support continuous improvement and integrate new legislative requirements and emerging best practice.*

*ACSL is working with Australian Catholic Church entities to reach the goal of having all Catholic entities audited or reviewed against the NCSS by 2025. Australian Catholic entities have the choice of engaging ACSL as an auditor or selecting from a range of audit providers on the newly established [NCSS External Auditor Register](#).*