

## - MEDIA RELEASE -

### **New Indigenous artwork helps tell story of ACSL and commitment to a safe Church**

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A new Indigenous artwork that helps tell the story of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) and its commitment to creating safe spaces for everyone has this month been launched by ACSL.

Created by Aboriginal artist and Wiradjuri woman Lani Balzan, 'The Path of Healing and Protection' is a contemporary artwork that tells the story of ACSL's mission: to create a culture of safety, care, and respect within the Catholic Church in Australia, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

'The artwork celebrates inclusion, restorative practice, and the concept of safe spaces while representing the transformative journey of healing and spirituality', Ms Balzan said.

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens said that the artwork underscores ACSL's recognition of Indigenous Australians as vital and valued members of the Catholic Church in Australia.

'Injustices and abuse suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been profound. Yet in spite of this painful history, our Church has been greatly enriched by Indigenous Spirituality and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples retain their Catholic faith and are vital members of our Church.'

'This artwork shows our determination to acknowledge the trauma that has been experienced by so many First Nations Australians within the Church, and at the same time, our resolution to pursue the path of healing and to ensure that our Church is safe for all people, through a shared commitment to safety and care,' Dr Stephens said.

Speaking further to the artwork, creator Lani Balzan explained its key elements:

'The central element of the artwork is the Gathering Symbol, representing Australian Catholic Safeguarding as an organisation. This symbol is adorned with a cross, embodying spirituality, faith, and guidance, which ACSL provides to those in need.'

'Surrounding the central symbol are 12 smaller Gathering Symbols, symbolising safe spaces. These spaces are built upon strong foundations, denoted by their solidity and interconnectedness, emphasising the importance of community, and working together.'

'The footprints leading along winding pathways represent the journeys that individuals have undertaken to overcome trauma. These paths symbolise the support and care provided by Australian Catholic Safeguarding, guiding them towards healing and restoration.'

'The background of the artwork is filled with an array of dots, which symbolise the overshadowing effects of the past on the lives of survivors of child sexual abuse. These dots acknowledge the challenges that individuals have faced but also represent the enduring commitment to ensuring people are protected from abuse in the future. The dots are a lighter colour than the foreground, symbolising the diminishing influence of the past as we move towards a brighter and safer future.'