

## - MEDIA RELEASE -

### Diocese of Darwin leaders champion safeguarding culture

6 November 2023

A safeguarding audit report of the Diocese of Darwin published this week by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) has identified committed leadership and efforts to embrace diversity as key safeguarding strengths in the Diocese.

The audit, completed in September 2023, assessed the Diocese's implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), a framework to promote the safety of children in Catholic organisations.

The Diocese undertook an NCSS Audit in 2019 and was assessed as having either fully implemented or substantially progressed in the implementation of 89 per cent of the indicators relevant to their ministries.

In the 2023 audit, which again concentrated on implementation of the child-focused NCSS, the Diocese has further progressed its implementation to reach a 100 per cent NCSS compliance rating.

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens said that in this second audit it was pleasing to see that the 13 recommendations from the 2019 audit had all been addressed and that safeguarding processes had overall been strengthened.

'From our review and testing of policies and procedures, our audit site visits to parishes, ministries and the chancery office, and in our interviews with key leadership personnel as well as those working in parishes, we found that a safeguarding culture has been well-established across the Diocese,' Dr Stephens said.

'Of particular note is the strong framework around risk management the Diocese has put in place, with risk assessments now being completed by all parishes for their key activities, and a diocesan risk register which is regularly updated'.

'We also observed good practice in efforts to make safeguarding materials accessible to the diverse range of communities who make up the Diocese. The Diocese is home to a number of multicultural communities, with several Masses being conducted in languages other than English.

'We could see there was an active focus on diversity in all of the Diocese's policies and practices, as well as a specific emphasis on engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities. Safeguarding materials continue to be updated to be relevant to these communities, which will be important as the Diocese works towards embedding safeguarding policies and procedures that address adults at risk as well as children.'

'We've provided five recommendations to the Diocese, which are a set of further practical safeguarding strategies and are intended to enhance and support existing practices,' Dr Stephens said.

The Diocese of Darwin covers an area of 1.3 million square kilometres and encompasses almost all of the Northern Territory. The safeguarding policies, procedures and practices for ministry and pastoral work of the Diocese cover 20 parishes, 18 schools and a range of social welfare agencies.

View the Diocese of Darwin's audit report on [ACSL's website](#).