

- MEDIA RELEASE -

First gathering of new National Appeals and Review Panel leads to increased focus on trauma-informed review processes

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A recent meeting of the National Appeals and Review Panel, facilitated by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL), has resulted in a greater focus on trauma-informed review processes.

To support the Catholic Church's ongoing commitment to a fair and just complaints process, ACSL has established the National Appeals and Review Panel (NARP). NARP is the mechanism through which parties to a complaint relating to the abuse of minors or adults at risk within a Catholic entity can request a review of an investigation process or finding, and/or complaints process or outcome.

The 16 December 2023 meeting allowed the Panel to gather face to face for the first time since its formal inception under ACSL.

The Panel is Chaired by former Federal Court Judge The Honourable Duncan Kerr. The Panel comprises nine members experienced in law and investigations.

Speaking on the importance of the first in-person meeting of the Panel, The Hon Duncan Kerr said that a large focus of the discussion was on implementing a therapeutic jurisprudence approach, which involves considering mental health and wellbeing in conjunction with legal process and practice.

"To support this approach, the Panel discussed at length how in our role we can better consider the wellbeing of both complainants and respondents through our review processes. We agreed that part of this is allowing reviewers, should the circumstances support it, to gather additional information to finalise the review rather than setting aside investigation findings and recommending the appointment of a new investigation," The Hon Kerr said.

"Historically reviews were conducted as a desk audit, and gathering further information was not considered to be part of the review process. With our newly agreed process we hope that this can assist to reduce the time and financial impacts of the complaint and review processes, supporting a more trauma-informed approach for those involved," The Hon Kerr said.

The December meeting was also an opportunity to review and outline the Panel's governance structure and process of appointment to the Panel, and to provide feedback on a range of Panel policies and procedures.

More information on the role and scope of the National Appeals and Reviews Panel, including panel members biographies, are available on [ACSL's website](#).

ACSL works with Catholic entities to promote and oversee a nationally consistent, comprehensive and sustainable framework for the protection of children and adults at risk within the Church in Australia.