

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Australia represented at the 2024 International Safeguarding Conference

5 July 2024

Australia has fielded a large delegation to the International Safeguarding Conference, held in Rome this year. The conference, which took place from 18-21 June 2024, was themed 'Safeguarding and Disability'.

Representatives from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), archdioceses and dioceses and religious institutes from across Australia were in attendance alongside Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd's (ACSL) own Director of Safeguarding and Compliance, Dr David Treanor and Director of Professional Standards, Ms Karen Mosley. Also attending was ACSL Board Member Dr Robyn Miller, in her capacity as CEO of Mackillop Family Services

Conference attendee Bishop Greg Bennet, Chair of the Bishops' Commission for Professional Standards & Safeguarding and ACBC member representative to ACSL said:

"I was privileged to attend the 2024 international safeguarding conference with its particular focus on the care of all members of the Church, especially those who live with various disabilities. I was challenged by the key presenters to consider how we ensure that all people entrusted to our care have access and the support they require to ensure they truly belong. We were challenged to consider how engagement at times "disables" others from them truly experiencing a sense of belonging and accompaniment which is at the essence of the Church."

"It was a wonderful gathering of 200 plus people from around the globe, so it is powerful to think the Church is becoming a true leader in safeguarding in so many countries. The Australian contingent were wonderful contributors to the conference, and I was pleased to see this recognised throughout by their leadership and the sharing of professional learning."

"Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we must continue our efforts to build communities where all God's people can truly belong (no one is excluded), be welcomed and contribute their gift," Bishop Greg said.

ACSL's Director of Safeguarding and Compliance Dr David Treanor participated in a panel on Australian perspectives of safeguarding and disability, using the opportunity to speak about the 2023 Royal Commission findings into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation for People with Disabilities and possible implications for our Church in Australia.

"Safeguarding and disability is an under researched topic, so it was pleasing to see it receiving the focus it deserves at this global gathering. One thing I think we will all take away from this conference is attention to our communication styles with people who have disabilities, to ensure that people are not excluded from participation due to styles of language and our all-too-common reliance on the written word only. There is more we can all do in being patient, creative, attentive and active in employing different styles of communication."

"As well as hearing from so many thoughtful presenters, it was also great to meet and network with international colleagues and learn about their new safeguarding initiatives," Dr Treanor said.

A declaration from the 2024 International Safeguarding Conference delegates has now been released, available [here](#). The topic for the 2025 conference will be: "Women of Faith, Women of Strength: A Safeguarding Conference."