

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Safety of children and adults at risk in focus for Launceston Carmelite Nuns

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A safeguarding audit report published today by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd has found that the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Launceston are taking safeguarding seriously in their unique ministry environment.

The Nuns are an enclosed, contemplative community of religious women dedicated to prayer.

The safeguarding review, carried out by ACSL from June to August 2024, checked that key policies, procedures and processes to protect children or adults at risk are being implemented within the community.

The assessment found that 91 per cent of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards indicators relevant to their operations are currently being implemented.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer Dr Ursula Stephens said that despite the Nuns' low risk environment, every Catholic entity needs to have safety as a top priority.

"The fact is, any ministry activity presents a degree of risk of harm to children or people who are vulnerable, and the Catholic Church made a commitment to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to ensure that all aspects of Church life prioritise the safety of children."

"At ACSL we have taken the approach that safeguarding reviews and audits should be proportionate to the risk of ministry activities. In the case of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Launceston, there are few activities with people outside the community and no unsupervised interactions with children at all. Taking this into account, our review was focused on the elements of the NCSS relating to leadership and culture, human resource management, complaints management, ongoing education and training, and continuous improvement".

"Through our policy review and interviews with Nuns within the community, we saw that there are excellent human resource practices in place, with the development of the human person a central focus. This is particularly significant for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Launceston, which is notable for having a younger age demographic compared to many Australian religious communities, and which has a number of women entering formation."

"Our review also considered that there is an increased risk to a Nun who lives in a cloistered community, who could experience spiritual abuse from either a member of their community or a member of clergy. The Carmelite Nuns recognise this risk and have adequate independent reporting processes available to their congregation to mitigate such risks occurring."

"The review showed that the Nuns have a growth mindset, which is critical to good safeguarding practice. The safety of children and adults at risk, and the past failings of the Catholic Church in relation to abuse is an ongoing focus for the Nuns, who are dedicated to offering prayers for survivors of abuse within the Church," Dr Stephens said.

"Our audit team has two recommendations for improvements for the Nuns. These relate to consolidating a risk register and ensuring online risks are adequately addressed, and piloting some new safeguarding training for the formation program," Dr Stephens said.

View the Discalced Carmelite Nuns Launceston full audit report 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.