

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Collegiate leadership steers strong safeguarding approach in Catholic Diocese of Sale

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Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) has today published the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) audit report for the Catholic Diocese of Sale.

Completed in September 2024, the audit assessed safeguarding practices for both children and adults at risk in place within the Diocese. The audit found that the 100 per cent of the NCSS indicators relevant to the Diocese's operations are either at a developed stage or developed and embedded across the Diocese.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer Dr Ursula Stephens who participated in the audit remarked that the Diocese's commendable progress in implementing the NCSS reflects strong leadership in the Diocese.

"We found a culture of collegiate leadership in the Diocese in relation to safeguarding. During our audit fieldwork, Diocesan personnel consistently provided feedback to the audit team that the Bishop and the Professional Standards team demonstrated leadership and transparent safeguarding governance practices. This tells us that the Diocese is walking the talk when it comes to building a culture of safety of care for those that are most vulnerable in their community."

"NCSS safeguarding audits are more than just a tick the box exercise, they actually provide the opportunity for dioceses to evaluate how they can be creating more welcoming and safe communities," Dr Stephens said.

"ACSL's audit team have identified some areas for improvement for the Diocese that will move specific systems and processes from satisfactory to excellent."

"For instance, while we saw that the Diocese has demonstrated significant efforts to be inclusive and engage children, which is a key facet of the NCSS, we have suggested ways that the Diocese can now expand this engagement to include adults at risk, by making material for programs supporting adults at risk more widely available, and ensuring adults at risk are engaged in feedback processes."

"Another area where the Diocese can ensure its commitment to safeguarding children and adults at risk is translated to practice is to ensure its Code of Conduct is updated to state that it applies to all personnel (paid and volunteer). Similarly, ensuring that annual appraisals are being completed for all types of personnel, and these appraisals including a safeguarding dimension will help safeguarding remain in focus across the Diocese," Dr Stephens said.

Bishop Greg Bennet, leader of the Diocese of Sale reflected that the experience of the audit had been a positive one.

"The engagement in the process of undertaking the ACSL Audit has been challenging, positive, and affirming for the Diocese of Sale," said Bishop Bennet.

"I am so grateful for the many volunteers, staff, and clergy across our Diocese who, on a daily basis, have made safeguarding of children and adults at risk a pastoral and personal priority. Our audit affirms their profound effort, commitment, and care. With the ACSL Audit report, we will continue strengthening our practices and policies," said Bishop Bennet.

The full audit report for the Diocese of Sale is available on [ACSL's website](#).