

## - MEDIA RELEASE -

### **Safeguarding audit affirms commitments in Cairns Diocese**

**8 November 2024**

The Catholic Diocese of Cairns has undertaken its safeguarding audit and received 95 per cent compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), according to the audit report published by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) today.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ursula Stephens, said that the audit demonstrated that the Diocese has comprehensive child safeguarding policies and procedures in place. She acknowledged the efforts of the Diocesan safeguarding personnel to ensure that policies were being met in practice and commended the integration of safeguarding across the diverse ministries within the Diocese.

ACSL made six recommendations to improve safeguarding practices within the Diocese. These recommendations were accepted and work is already underway to implementing them. There are no high priority recommendations for the Diocese. The audit was undertaken against Version 1 of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, which focus on children and young people.

“The recommendations for improvement reflect an acknowledgement of the diverse cultural communities within the Diocese, and an ongoing commitment to understand and implement responsibilities of safeguarding adults at risk,” Dr Stephens said.

Bishop Joseph Caddy AM was installed as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Cairns 15 August 2024. While the audit fieldwork was undertaken earlier in the year, Bishop Caddy and the Diocesan leadership team received the final audit report for consideration in October.

“I am encouraged by the conclusions of the Diocese’s first audit report and extend heartfelt appreciation to all who committed to building a strong safeguarding culture over many years, and blessings to all who generously dedicated time to participate in the audit process,” Bishop Caddy said.

“Safeguarding is intrinsic to our faith and Catholic Social Teaching, and we will refine and strengthen our processes so that safeguarding children, youth, and adults at-risk is paramount and at the core of everything we do in the Diocese of Cairns,” Bishop Caddy said.

The Cairns Diocese responds to the ministry needs of a high visitor population, as well as its 23 parishes, and staff are vigilant in managing safeguarding issues across the services embedded in local communities. CentacareFNQ, Catholic Early Learning and Care (CELC) and Catholic Education also provide safeguarding leadership that is valued within the Diocese.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards provide the framework for Catholic Church entities to build child-safe cultures and to advance the safety and dignity of children and vulnerable people across the Catholic Church in Australia.

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

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*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.*

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