

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Second safeguarding audit of Christian Brothers of Oceania Province completed

12 December 2024

The Christian Brothers Oceania Province have implemented 98 per cent of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards for children and adults at risk, according to a new safeguarding audit report published today by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL).

The Christian Brothers underwent their first safeguarding audit in 2020 and were assessed for their implementation of child-focused safeguarding policies, procedures and practises.

Their second audit was completed between August – November 2024 and focused on current safeguarding strategies for the Province of 190 Brothers living across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, and with partnerships in East Timor and the Philippines.

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens said that the 2024 audit differed from the first in two key respects.

‘Since the first audit, the Christian Brothers’ risk profile has reduced because the Trustees of the Christian Brothers no longer have governance over the entities where Brothers minister directly with children.’

‘This audit is also different because it has included requirements for adults at risk as well as children. We have focused on crucial areas like human resource management, complaints handling and safe physical and online environments.’

‘Our audit team found that the Christian Brothers has a zero-tolerance policy for abuse, and this is backed up by solid safeguarding infrastructure including a detailed Safeguarding and Professional Integrity Policy, Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Complaints Handling Policy.’

‘A strong safeguarding working group which includes independent members reports to the Risk, Safeguarding and Policy Committee with oversight of safeguarding functions. The team also communicate regularly with their communities about safeguarding matters.’

‘Our interviews with a sample of Brothers and other personnel indicated a strong commitment to the values and behaviours encouraged within the policies, and all were conscious of the importance of safeguarding for their community’s well-being.’

‘Our audits are geared towards continuous improvement and helping Church entities be the safest place they can be for vulnerable groups like children and adults at risk.’

‘We identified some actions that will help further embed safeguarding best practice. For instance, in the area of record keeping it has been a challenge for the Province to secure its historical records in relation to Towards Healing case files from Church entities where Christian Brothers have previously held governance.’

‘We recommend that the Christian Brothers contact all Church entities and seek the immediate release of the historical records from their time of governance over the ministries in these locations.’

‘Our recommendations have been accepted by the Christian Brothers leadership team and will be implemented in the next 12-18 months,’ Dr Stephens said.

Br Gerard Brady, Christian Brothers Oceania Province Leader stated: ‘We appreciate the work of ACSL in conducting this second independent safeguarding audit, ensuring that the Christian Brothers and our associated ministries continue to be committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of any people who come under our responsibility, especially those most vulnerable.’

'It is also important that this audit holds us accountable and transparent in the way we, as part of society and Church, go about our work, ministry, and general living. We welcome the report and continue to be committed to support and uphold these key safeguarding standards,' Br Gerard concluded.

The full audit report is 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.

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