

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar deeply committed to safety of people in the Hunter, audit finds

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The Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar are committed to placing the needs and safety of the Hunter community first, according to a safeguarding audit report published today by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL).

The audit assessed how the Sisters have implemented the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), the national framework for the safety of children and adults at risk Catholic entities in Australia.

The audit found 100 per cent of the NCSS indicators relevant to the Sisters had been substantially implemented at the time of the assessment.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer Dr Ursula Stephens noted that the Sisters are deeply rooted in their community.

‘The Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar have been very faithful to the people of the Hunter region, and this fidelity has been accompanied by a commitment to ensuring the safety of the children and adults at risk they encounter in ministry,’ Dr Stephens said.

‘While as an ageing congregation there are now fewer Sisters in active ministry, a handful of Sisters remain in ministry.’

‘For example, one Sister provides ministry at Mum’s Cottage which offers a safe space for mothers to gather and receive practical, emotional and spiritual support.’

‘The ministry is well-regarded and run as a joint initiative with two local Uniting Churches.’

‘The Sisters remaining in ministry have a sound knowledge of their safeguarding responsibilities and a genuine commitment to furthering their safeguarding capabilities,’ Dr Stephens said.

‘The Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar’s leadership team are also deeply aware of the increasing needs of their own members as they age, and recognising that some of their own members are now adults at risk.’

‘The leadership is taking proactive measures and employing professionals, including Registered Nurses and professional care personnel, to ensure the needs of the ageing members are being met.’

‘Our report has highlighted some additional areas where the Sisters can enhance their safeguarding practice.’

‘One recommendation relates to the safety of Sisters who remain living independently. We have recommended that accommodation risk assessment checklists are expanded, and the Sisters are encouraged to wear and make use of their on-call alarms,’ Dr Stephens said.

Sr Patricia McCarthy, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of St Joseph Lochinvar reaffirmed the congregation’s ongoing commitment to children and adults at risk.

‘We are and have always been committed to the high ethical standards incorporated into our Code of Conduct, and to thorough compliance with all the requirements in our safeguarding documentation and practice,’ Sr Patricia said.

The 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.