

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Dominican Education Australia Ministries: Committed to a strong safeguarding culture

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Dominican Education Australia has successfully embedded safeguarding within its culture, demonstrating a high level of commitment and understanding of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Australian Catholic Safeguarding recently undertook a comprehensive safeguarding audit of DEA, which involved evaluating the documents, policies and procedures in place both at the governance level and within the DEA Schools.

DEA is the first Ministerial Public Juridic Person to undertake an audit against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, which align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and include accountability commitments made by Catholic leadership following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

DEA undertook a self-assessment which was followed by a review, discussions with the Trustees, the DEA leadership and visits to five DEA Schools in South Australia and New South Wales. Participating schools were Cabra Dominican College, St Dominic's Priory College, St Mary's College, St Lucy's School and Santa Sabina College.

ACSL also recognises the DEA-based Victorian Ministry of Siena College who has been assessed as meeting the NCSS by the Victorian Catholic Education Authority

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens commended DEA for the way in which safeguarding is built into the curriculum of the DEA schools and the professionalism of staff in their commitment to protecting and respecting the rights of their students. Fundamental to the DEA safeguarding approach is awareness of trauma-informed care and encouraging personal responsibility for others.

"The education sector is highly regulated, and the ACSL audit framework takes this into account, by moving beyond a compliance focus to one that measures an organisation's maturity in safeguarding responses. We are impressed by the ways in which DEA is focused on student wellbeing and accommodating the diverse needs of students within their schools."

Parents, teachers and students were also interviewed during the audit. Students spoke confidently about how their sense of safety and wellbeing was nurtured within their schools. The auditors noted evidence of this care in the design of school spaces, the relationships between younger and older students and the opportunities for students, parents and friends to be engaged in community activities.

Dr David Treanor, Director of Safeguarding and Compliance with ACSL was lead auditor and noted "The many opportunities to see the principles of Catholic Social Teaching being imbued in school life were also a joyful part of the audit program."

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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“Through our audit we identified some areas for improvement, resulting in minor recommendations that will further embed safeguarding in all aspects of Dominican Education Australia Ministries.”

All recommendations have been accepted by DEA and will be implemented in the next 12 months, along with continued vigilance and awareness of emerging risks.

View the DEA audit report on ACSL’s website.