

- MEDIA RELEASE -

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Archdiocese of Adelaide Demonstrates Strong Safeguarding Culture in Independent National Audit

The Archdiocese of Adelaide has received a strong independent assessment of its safeguarding practices, with Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) finding it is successfully implementing and embedding a culture of safeguarding throughout its organisation.

In March 2026, the audit assessed compliance with all 10 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) across parishes, Catholic Education South Australia schools and Centacare Catholic Community Services, finding that most safeguarding requirements were firmly in place.

The audit was conducted jointly by ACSL and Safeguarding Central across 14 parishes, 9 schools, and 2 Centacare ministries, with over 90 interviews conducted including clergy, staff, volunteers, parishioners, school students, and parents.

Dr Ursula Stephens, CEO of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited has praised the Archdiocese for its leadership in promoting a strong safeguarding culture.

“The audit’s overarching finding is unambiguous: the Archdiocese of Adelaide is successfully embedding a culture of safeguarding across its organisation. Strong leadership from Archbishop O’Regan, the Chancery, and the Integrity and Safeguarding Department, which was established in October 2023, has translated into real practice on the ground. “

Across the parishes and schools visited, personnel were found to champion and model sound safeguarding practices, procedures, and language. Auditors observed that all parishes and ministries have safeguarding embedded in their leadership structures.

Archbishop Patrick O’Regan was pleased to hear that the safeguards being implemented by his team, led by executive director Adam Cartland, have been independently recognised.

“Ensuring we adhere to the highest possible safeguarding standards within the Archdiocese is fundamental to the daily life of everyone connected with the Church,” he said.

“The recognition, by the ACSL, of the work undertaken by the Integrity and Safeguarding Department to connect our safeguarding efforts across the Archdiocese (including Catholic Education and Centacare) over the past few years is an important, and welcome, part of that process and a timely reminder to continue the focus of safeguarding.”

The single strongest result in the audit was in complaints management (Standard 6), This means anyone who experiences harm have clear, accessible, and well-understood pathways to raise concerns and be supported. Processes are actively promoted by Local Safeguarding Representatives across ministries. This level of performance in complaints management is a direct response to the failures of the past and represents a meaningful commitment to accountability.

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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The audit confirmed that in regulated agencies and people-facing roles, the voices and views of children and adults at risk are genuinely listened to and incorporated into ministry and service delivery.

The Archdiocese's approach was found to be trauma-informed and empathetic, drawing on academic research to better engage those with greater vulnerability. This reflects a maturity of approach that goes beyond compliance to genuine care for those the Church serves.

Centacare Catholic Services was specifically noted for its clinical supervision model, including one-on-one supervision, team supervision, and access to senior practitioners.

The audit also identified areas of improvement as part of the Archdiocese's continuous improvement plan. The Royal Commission stressed the importance of Professional supervision of clergy as a safeguarding measure that cannot be ignored. Further Investment in managing online safety and training to support stronger oversight of WWCC, risk assessments and volunteer management is encouraged.

The Archdiocese of Adelaide has committed to addressing all recommendations. The full audit report, is publicly available on the ACSL website at www.acsltd.org.au

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