

- MEDIA RELEASE -

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Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth audit highlights safeguarding founded on human dignity

A safeguarding audit of the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth has highlighted the central importance of human dignity in the Congregation's approach to safeguarding, governance and care. The Congregation's engagement with the adults at risk entrusted to their care permeates inherent value, respect and worth of each person. Published by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd, the report found the Congregation had fully implemented or substantially progressed 95 of 98 relevant indicators under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, reflecting a strong commitment to safe practice, accountability and respectful care.

The audit recognised that the Congregation's safeguarding culture is expressed not only through policies and procedures, but through values deeply grounded in compassion, justice, hospitality, respect and the dignity of every person. Across its ministries and residential settings, the Congregation's work with adults at risk reflects a clear commitment to ensuring that each person is treated with care, listened to seriously, and supported in environments that uphold their safety, worth and freedom from abuse, neglect and discrimination.

The Community are "delighted that our recent audit with ACSL will be released at the time of our Congregational feast of our foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth – Victoire Larmenier – died 16th June 1878.

Our first experience working with ACSL with the audit process has been very rewarding and encouraging. Safeguarding always entails continuous improvement to which we are open and committed. Safeguarding is paramount and we 'insist upon a zero-tolerance to abuse and neglect by anyone connected to Nazareth. Our commitment stems from our belief in the dignity of every person and the founding vision and Gospel values of the Congregation."

The report identified strengths across leadership, governance, education, complaints handling and safeguarding systems. It also outlined practical recommendations to support continuous improvement, including the development of stronger risk registers, improved record management systems, greater visibility of safeguarding contact information, and continued work on online and information management arrangements.

"Safeguarding is, at its heart, about recognising and protecting the dignity of every person," said Dr Ursula Stephens, Chief Executive Officer of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd. "This audit shows that the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth is continuing to build a culture in which adults at risk are respected, heard and kept safe, and where safeguarding is understood as a practical expression of care, dignity and accountability."

The findings reinforce the importance of embedding safeguarding into everyday culture and practice. They also show that human dignity is not an abstract principle, but a lived commitment that shapes how communities accompany, protect and respond to people, especially those who may be vulnerable or at risk.

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 also reflects the Congregation's openness to continuous improvement. Its recommendations provide practical next steps that will help strengthen already well-established safeguarding practices and ensure that the commitment to human dignity continues to be supported by clear systems, visibility and accountability.

The full audit report, is publicly available on the ACSL website at www.acsltd.org.au.

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