



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING LTD

A safe Church for everyone

REGISTER AS AN NCSS AUDITOR

National
Catholic
Safeguarding
Standards

INFORMATION
PACK



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Disclaimer:

Being listed on the Register is subject to demonstration of the minimum requirements for an external quality assurance/ compliance auditor. It does not imply any obligation on behalf of ACSL to guarantee a minimum level of service, nor does it purport to qualify any entity placed on the Register, based on the information provided.



A safe Church for everyone

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REGISTER TO AUDIT THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

Legislative framework and NCSS

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) are the foundation for the work of the Catholic Church in Australia to ensure a safe Church for everyone. The Standards are the basis of the Church's response to issues raised with the Catholic Church by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and directly align with the National Child Safety Principles.

The National Child Safe Principles have been adopted by the Council of Australian Governments and State and Territory legislation is progressively being put in place to regulate safeguarding practices. It is intended that meeting the requirements of the NCSS will provide evidence that a Catholic Authority or entity also complies with requirements of State and Territory based regulators. The NCSS Ed. 2 incorporates specific considerations of adults at risk, which may apply to some Catholic Entities or their ministries.

To help Catholic Authorities comply with the NCSS, ACSL has developed a self-assessment portal, where they can upload all evidence required to demonstrate the maturity of their implementation of the Standards. It is intended that the external assessment of a Catholic Authority will draw on the evidence uploaded to this portal. ACSL has also developed a risk-based audit and review framework, which acknowledges the diversity in size and complexity of Church Authorities. The model provides a proportionate response to auditing compliance, depending upon each Catholic Authority's risk status. For example, a Catholic Authority without ministries for children or adults at risk, and with no history of abuse, permits an assessment against three standards rather than ten standards.

The Catholic Church environment

The organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia is complex, based on many historical and cultural factors. The Church is governed by both Canon Law and Civil law and is made up of many different structures, including Dioceses, Religious Institutes and Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (MPJPS). The definition of a Catholic Entity includes: (a) a Diocese; (b) a religious institute or society of apostolic life; (c) a public juridic person of Diocesan or pontifical right; (d) a public association of Christ's faithful; (e) a private association of Christ's faithful; (f) any other incorporated entity carrying on or responsible for a Catholic Ministry or apostolate within a diocese with the approval of the diocesan bishop; (g) a personal prelature, or an incorporated entity associated with a personal prelature; or (h) any other incorporated entity being an association of the lay faithful carrying out their own apostolate in reliance on canons 225 and 227 of the Canon Law.

Dioceses generally have governance and oversight of parishes and formal ministries (which may

include entities) which operate under the jurisdictional authority of a Bishop. A religious institute operates under the constitution of the religious order, which may be based in Australia or in another country. If members of a religious institute are providing services within a Diocese, they do so with the permission of the bishop. Catholic entities may also operate services within highly regulated environments – for example early learning centres, schools, hospitals, aged care, facilities, etc.

A Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) is a legal entity under canon law that allows the Church's ministries to function in the name of the Catholic Church. These have been established by Religious Institutes and some dioceses to ensure the continuation of Catholic ministries in the areas of health, education, and community services. These MPJPs operate in highly regulated environments.

ACSL will work with Catholic Authorities to develop an agreed scope for audits and reviews. ACSL will also provide an induction program to eligible applicants for the Register, which includes information on the Church environment and the specific requirements of the Royal Commission that are incorporated into the NCSS.

Requirements for Registration to Audit the NCSS

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards form a part of the Church's system of risk management. As such, it is important that every auditor understands the Church environment, issues around child safety and the details of the NCSS.

To ensure this, auditors are required to demonstrate the following minimum requirements:

- Current ISO 19011, or an equivalent auditor qualification, or registration with a professional body.
- Experience in auditing organisations providing services to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults.
- Qualifications and full-time equivalent experience relevant to the health, education, or community services sector.
- Current national State or Territory Working with Children or Working with Vulnerable People check.
- A National Police Check.
- Willingness to undertake the NCSS Induction Program.
- Possess the knowledge, skills, and technical proficiency essential to the performance of safeguarding audits.
- Ability to communicate audit issues effectively to a range of people.

NCSS Auditor Induction Program Cost

The cost of the NCSS Audit Induction Program is \$595 per person.

**** Please note**, Auditors are required to complete the NCSS Assessor Quality Program prior to being added to the Register.

Registration Term

Auditors will maintain their registration on the Register for an initial period of three years unless they:

- Withdraw from the register; or
- Are no longer eligible to conduct audits.

Scope of Work of the NCSS Safeguarding Audit

ACSL has an established Safeguarding and Improvement program for Church Authorities, which includes ongoing monitoring and periodic self-assessments, combined with a strategic external safeguarding review at least once each three years.

Using the ACSL risk-based framework for assessment and review, it is ACSL's role to work with each Catholic Authority to determine the scope of the audit or review, prior to the engagement of an independent auditor. This scoping exercise is to ensure assessments are undertaken across the diverse range of ministries and entities, and consistent with a whole of Church response. Priority areas for review will be identified through the Scoping Agreement, with guidance from ACSL.

It will be the responsibility of the Auditor to meet the requirements of the Scope Schedule, which will include:

- Desk top review of documentation.
- Site visits, interviews with personnel, volunteers, and discussions with the entity leadership team.
- Examination of records, policies, and procedures.
- Preparation of the Assessment, Audit or Review Report.

The scope of service provided will encompass:

- Examining and evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of systems of internal control, risk management, governance, and the status of ethical behaviour in relation to safeguarding.
- Determining conformity with the requirements of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.
- Assessing compliance with policies, procedures, plans and legislation.
- Determining the reliability and integrity of information.

- Identifying recommendations for improvement.

Objectivity, Independence and Organisational Status

Auditors are required to maintain an appropriate level of independence and objectiveness, to avoid bias and conflicts of interest.

To maintain integrity and transparency:

- An auditor cannot undertake an assessment regarding operations or services for which he / she has held responsibility within the last twelve (12) months.
- An auditor who provides consulting services regarding safeguarding to a Church entity cannot provide safeguarding assurance on that same Church entity.
- The auditor must use a robust and appropriate auditing policy framework.
- When engaging an auditor Church Authorities will take steps to identify, evaluate the significance of, and manage any perceived or actual conflicts of interest that may impinge upon safeguarding assessment work.

Audit Methodology

The Auditor will use the most appropriate methodology for each assessment engagement, depending on the nature of the activity and the pre-determined scope of the assessment. The Catholic Authority will provide the auditor access to their entries in the ACSL Self-Assessment Portal and other documentation. It is the responsibility of the auditor to validate the evidence provided.

Generally, the assessment will include:

- Planning.
- Reviewing and assessing risks in the context of the audit objectives.
- Examination and evaluation of information.
- Communicating results.
- Seeking an agreed and endorsed action plan outlining remedial action to be taken, along with an implementation timetable.

Reporting Arrangements

Once the audit is complete, and the results have been provided to the Catholic Authority, a report detailing how the scope has been met, how the audit was conducted, and the audit results, including recommended actions and timeframes for a continuous improvement plan, based on the outcome of the assessment, will be provided to ACSL. ACSL will make all audit reports available to the ACSL

Board and draw to the attention of the Board any issues, trends, or concerns in relation to the implementation of the NCSS. ACSL will publish the audit report.

Audit Costs

The Auditor will be engaged directly by the Catholic Authority. The costs of the audit will be negotiated directly with the Catholic Authority.

How to register:

To register your interest for the NCSS Auditor Panel, please complete the registration form (linked below) and submit the associated information outlined in the form by email to assess@acsltd.org.au.

[Registration form](#)