



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING LTD

A safe Church for everyone

ANNUAL REPORT

1 JULY 2021 - 30 JUNE 2022

[ACSLTD.ORG.AU](https://acsltd.org.au)

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd acknowledges the lifelong trauma of abuse victims, survivors and their families, the failure of the Catholic Church to protect, believe and respond justly to children and vulnerable adults, and the consequent breaches of community trust.

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd is committed to fostering a culture of safety and care for children and adults at risk.



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Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of Australia. We pay respect to their Elders, past and present, and young leaders of today and the future. ACSL commits itself to the ongoing work of reconciliation with our Aboriginal families and communities.

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About ACSL

ACSL has been created 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. We have zero tolerance of abuse and we work to ensure a safe Church for everyone.

OUR VISION

Nurturing and safe Catholic entities that are committed to reflective practice in safeguarding, open to external scrutiny, and accountable for how they protect children and adults at risk from abuse in their encounters with the Church.

OUR MISSION

Supporting Church Leaders and Catholic entities in their work to foster a culture of safety and protection of children, young people, and adults within the Catholic Church across Australia.

VALUES

Leadership

we are courageous in promoting the rights and safety of children and adults at risk as they engage with the ministries of the Catholic Church.

Respect

we value and respect children, families, professionals, Church Authorities and each other, always.

Integrity

our work is based on evidence and expertise. It is always ethical and transparent.

Compassion

we honour the dignity of all and work with understanding, respect, and care.

Equity

we promote and support empowerment and inclusiveness in how we work and what we do.

We work to embed our values in everything we do.

Our Work

We provide integrated safeguarding services that are informed by Catholic social teaching, and support Church entities to meet their responsibilities to provide safe environments for children and adults at risk.

Professional development

- Providing tailored education and professional development programs

Resources and support

- Producing training and support materials for Professional Standards and Safeguarding Officers

Standards and continuous improvement

- Monitoring the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Undertaking research and analysis of professional standards and safeguarding efforts

Complaints response and investigations

- Overseeing the management of complaints against Church Authorities
- Managing databases related to Church safeguarding

Reviews, audits and assessments

- Providing an independent certification audit and review program of safeguarding practices

Research, data and projects

- Identifying and managing appropriate data collection by Church Authorities, and working with the members and state and territory regulators, to promote the safety of all who come in contact with Church entities.
- Working on whole-of-Church safeguarding initiatives, including drafting of national codes.



Message from the Chair



Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) was established in December 2020 with the overarching purpose to assist the Catholic Church to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all who engage with the ministries and services provided by the Church. The focus of the organisation is on the well-being of children and 'adults at risk' - namely people who for physical or emotional reasons or other circumstances are particularly vulnerable and in need of support.

This report covers the 2021/21 financial year and reflects 18 months of the operation of ACSL since it was created and absorbed the functions previously performed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL) and the Australian Catholic Centre for Professional Services. The last 12 months have been a period of consolidation and some challenges for the company.

The work of consolidation has seen the company embed its complaints review function and its support to both Church entities and complainants seeking to access records in relation to potential claims. A great deal of staff time is devoted to assisting people seeking information about the Church and liaising with various Church entities.

Equally, ACSL has now completed 30 audits of Church entities against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS, the Standards). Each of these audits focuses on both monitoring and reporting but also on building capacity and further improving safeguarding systems and processes within Church entities. An important achievement was the development and implementation of the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal that enables the loading of information required for the conduct of an audit under the NCSS but equally can be used to assist in preparing to respond to government regulatory safeguarding obligations applying to a Church entity.

The NCSS is very much the foundation for the company's work. The Standards translate the best practice guidance of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the regulatory safeguarding obligations of governments into a framework of safeguarding practices customised for the circumstances of the Catholic Church. The NCSS provides the basis for the company's training and professional development activities and are the benchmark for Church entities reporting their performance in safeguarding to the wider community.

The NCSS has standing and influence because they are the Church's standards. The Standards only become operational when formally adopted by the members of ACSL — the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP). This means the NCSS carry the weight of the Church as a whole.

And here lies the great challenge for ACSL, namely that the Catholic Church is enormously diverse in its entities and structures and its governance models reflect this diversity. In short, gaining common positions on policies intended to have application across the Church such as the NCSS is a painstaking and time-consuming process. While good progress was made in 2021/22, as yet the second edition of the NCSS has not been adopted by ACSL's members.

This fact has real consequences for ACSL. While the company finished the financial year with a balanced budget, the forward program of capacity building and audit work from which the company draws fees for service income has been delayed due to the NCSS Ed. 2 not being adopted by the members, and this has a meaningful negative financial impact on the company. More importantly, it means that the Church does not have the benefit of an expanded and strengthened standards regime to guide its safeguarding work.

The company will continue to do its utmost to assist the members to resolve the final issues with the adoption of the NCSS and once completed, ACSL will roll out a robust program of professional development to enable Church entities to seamlessly implement the improved standards. Further, the complementary work on an external auditor panel to assist Church entities in choosing the right audit/review approach to match their risk profile will be introduced.

I would like to thank my fellow Directors for their counsel and hard work.

In particular, Mary McComish departed the Board at the end of the financial year and all Directors were very appreciative of Mary's contribution to the foundation period of the company. I also extend my thanks to the ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens for her unstinting efforts and good humour. The staff of the company have also been a tower of strength in diligently working to promote strong safeguarding practices in the Church.

Finally, and sadly the year saw the passing of Geoff Guidice the chair of CPSL, the principal predecessor body to ACSL. Geoff was a truly wonderful man, with a deep commitment to the mission of a safe and nurturing Church. His loss was deeply felt by all in the company who had the privilege to work with him.

Professor The Hon. Michael Lavarch AO
Board Chair

Message from the CEO



My first year at ACSL has been full of learning and challenges. There is a great sense of care and responsibility that each of our team has in responding to the theory of change we have developed for ACSL, to deliver on our responsibilities as outlined in the ACSL Constitution. The merging of functions, stabilising databases and integrating new processes are the day-to-day challenges, but the importance of engaging with the diverse range of ACSL stakeholders is paramount.

We have a strong and engaged Board of Directors, chaired by Michael Lavarch, who has travelled the journey through CPSL to ACSL, and guided us in ensuring strong governance and accountability to our Member Representatives. ACSL reports on our activities through a range of mechanisms: to the Bishops Commission for Professional Standards and Safeguarding, Quarterly Reports to the Member Representatives, the monthly e-newsletter, as well as through the many working and advisory groups in which we are participating.

Throughout the year I have been privileged to witness deeply moving efforts by religious leaders providing pastoral support for abuse victims. At the same time, there are those who come to ACSL seeking closure through an outcome that isn't achievable. That responsibility sits heavily with me, knowing that whatever ACSL can offer will never be enough. Recognising that trust, is a form of capital, that requires investment, we know it's not enough for us to simply be working to prevent future scandals or abuse. The stakes - and therefore expectations - in relation to betrayal are exponentially much higher. While we can never know the formula for rebuilding ecclesial trust, we do have the benefit of the Gospel and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to guide us.

Our work in ACSL is about enabling progress towards the common good and helping to rebuild the shattered trust in the Church that has come with revelations of abuse. Our focus has to be on telling the story of reparation, reform and recommitment to transparency and accountability that has been ongoing within the Church, especially following the Royal Commission. We tell that story when Church Authorities embrace the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, engage with the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal, and the professional development and learning opportunities on offer. We also tell that story in forums such as government advisory groups, seminars, and conferences, when we are able to provide examples of the best practice safeguarding that is being embraced within our Catholic institutions, working towards a safe Church for everyone.

My first year at ACSL ended with the International Safeguarding Conference in Rome, and the opportunity to speak directly with Pope Francis, whose commitment to safeguarding is unwavering. To meet with colleagues from around the world, to share the Australian experiences and to hear their challenges, especially in countries where Christianity is not the dominant faith, was profoundly inspiring and an immense privilege.

Dr Ursula Stephens
Chief Executive Officer

Our Year in Numbers

9

ENTITIES AUDITED
AGAINST THE NATIONAL
CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING
STANDARDS



20

entities completing
self-assessments
on the *NCSS Self-Assessment Portal*



129 *new*

ACMR ID holders



3,032

SUBSCRIBERS TO
ACSL'S MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER



377 people
attending ACSL
professional development training



176

Church leaders
and safeguarding personnel
participating in consultations
on ACSL projects



8

MEETINGS OF
THE BOARD



3 meetings with
ACSL's Member
Representatives

33

Board Committee
meetings



65+ working
group meetings
on ACSL projects

59

Church leaders and safeguarding personnel
attended webinars on preparing for NCSS Ed.2



Trauma-informed Approach

One of ACSL's most popular professional learning requests is about trauma-informed care. Church Authorities are keen to understand what this means for them, what they may need to change in their approach to the care and support for victims and survivors of abuse, and the implications for some of the most fundamental processes currently in place within the Church.

When we speak of a trauma-informed approach, we are seeking to shift the focus for victims of abuse from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?". We want to ensure that anyone who comes forward with an allegation of abuse has their voice heard, is recognised and acknowledged and is offered support, both external to and within the legal system.

A trauma-informed approach acknowledges our need to have a complete picture of a survivor's life situation — past and present — so that we can provide effective responses with a healing orientation. When we adopt trauma-informed responses, we are promoting efforts to potentially improve victim/survivor life-long engagement and outcomes.

A trauma informed approach can also help reduce future avoidable care and excess legal or other costs, because it seeks to:

- recognise and acknowledge the widespread impact of trauma and understand different pathways for recovery;
- recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma in victims, survivors, their families, and advocates;
- integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- actively avoid re-traumatisation.

Church Authorities dealing with claims of historic cases of abuse, are often having to manage very broken lives.

The NCSS encourages a shift from previous practices which may have implemented responses at the canonical or legal level, without the supports needed for broad organisational culture change within the Church. Such a narrow focus fails to recognise how Safeguarding Officers and Professional Standards Offices also have significant interactions with victims and survivors and can be critical to ensuring that they feel they have been listened to and are safe in revealing their trauma.

ACSL promotes a trauma-informed approach characterised by safety, trustworthiness and transparency. By this we mean that decisions are made with transparency, and with the goal of building and maintaining trust. For ACSL it means providing initial guidance then referrals to specialist supports, access to records on request, and, an independent review mechanism to complainants who may feel they haven't received procedural fairness in an investigation. This can be very challenging for Church Authorities, but ACSL has engagement with survivors and survivor advocacy groups that can support an individual, and the Church Authority managing an abuse allegation.



We also promote collaboration and empowerment.

By acknowledging the power imbalances that have occurred, which may have enabled abuse, the victim/survivors' strengths are recognised, built on, and validated. Importantly this includes a belief in resilience and the ability to heal from trauma, while acknowledging for some this will never be able to occur.

Biases and stereotypes of historical trauma are also recognised and acknowledged – an important factor for survivors of institutional sexual abuse and those taken into out of home

care, including the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were cut off from country, cultural supports and practices.

ACSL understands that many people who have suffered trauma have difficulty maintaining healthy, open relationships with peers, family or providers. Therefore, the importance of supporting survivors of abuse to engage fully in the Church Authority's response, requires creating safe, caring, inclusive environments for everyone engaged in the resolution process.

Safeguarding & Improvement

ACSL's mandate is to support Church leaders and Catholic organisations to create safe and nurturing environments for every person who comes into contact with the Church in Australia.

We work with dioceses, religious institutes, and ministries of the Catholic Church including education, social services and health, to promote a consistent and comprehensive safeguarding culture.

In 2021-2022, our Safeguarding and Improvement team focused on:

- creating learning opportunities for Catholic leaders and safeguarding personnel to enhance their capacity to safeguard children and adults at risk;
- working with individual Church entities to refine their safeguarding capabilities and respond to a range of safeguarding enquiries from across the country; and,
- working alongside members of the Church towards the adoption of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Edition 2, incorporating protections for adults at risk.

child safety and risk management practices through the verification of working with children checks.

- Hosting a webinar with Dr Joe Tucci of the Australian Childhood Foundation to present research from ACF's 2020-2021 research findings tracking community knowledge and attitudes about child abuse and child protection in Australia. **60** people attended the presentation and participated in a Q&A with Dr Tucci.
- Leading the first online training in a three-part series on professional and pastoral supervision entitled 'Self-care and supervision – Why this is important for safeguarding.' **24** safeguarding professionals and leaders from Catholic entities joined this session to explore an introduction to supervision and professional development outcomes.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

– BUILDING SAFEGUARDING CAPACITY

In 2021-2022, ACSL advanced its learning and development strategy goals of providing training and learning opportunities that strengthen the awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity of Catholic Church entities to safeguard children and adults at risk. We did this by:

- Hosting **2** NCSS Introductory Session for Leaders, for **64** Church Authorities and senior leaders within Church entities. In this session, Church leaders develop a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding generally and their responsibilities under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards specifically.
- Facilitating a special webinar focusing on safe human resource management with Oho. **73** participants joined this session which explored how organisations can strengthen

We asked participants what was most helpful about the Leaders training and they told us it was useful to:

- Hear the situations and ideas others
- Be able to meet other leaders and professionals in the field of safeguarding
- Receive a step-by-step explanation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and the learnings of ACSL thus far
- Be given real life advice on meeting current standards in safeguarding
- Find out how to tap into the resources available through ACSL and sharing with others in this area to gain ideas



Claire Rogers, CEO of Oho presenting a webinar on child safety and human resource management in 2021

WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL CHURCH ENTITIES TO DEVELOP THEIR SAFEGUARDING CAPABILITY

Every week ACSL responds to enquiries from Church entities with safeguarding queries specific to their own entity, or queries about how to implement best practices in child and adult safeguarding in their own context. While many enquiries are resolved over email or a phone call, some entities reach out to ACSL to deliver custom training for their personnel.



Dr Joe Tucci, CEO of Australian Childhood Foundation and ACSL's Director, Safeguarding & Improvement Daniele Donnini co-presenting a webinar presenting findings from ACF research

Working with the Syro-Malabar Eparchy of St Thomas the Apostle to provide training on professional supervision and pastoral boundaries

Over the past three years ACSL has worked several times with the Syro-Malabar Eparchy to provide safeguarding education and awareness training. Sessions have included general training for volunteers, presentations for Syro-Malabar personnel on the development of the NCSS and the National Response Protocol, and most recently, a targeted professional development session for Syro-Malabar clergy.

The clergy professional development session, which took place in November 2021, was delivered online by ACSL to 30 Syro-Malabar clergy including Bishop Bosco Puthur and Vicar General Fr. Francise Kolencherry. The session focused on raising awareness about professional/pastoral supervision and pastoral boundaries and included practical activities and breakout scenario discussions to both identify potential boundary issues and unpack appropriate responses.

There was a focus on the importance of clergy support and ongoing development, with information and discussion centred around Professional/Pastoral Supervision, Mentoring, Ministerial Reviews and ongoing Professional Development.

Robust discussion on requirements relating to creating safe environments and how these are implemented within parishes and workshoping scenarios relating to boundaries in ministry were highlights of the session.

After the session participants said that the workshoping of the scenarios was especially beneficial. It was also noted that the information provided on 'boundaries' and "explanation of what bullying is" was of particular benefit, as was the information on practical steps to address safety concerns and create a safe environment.

Some further support needs were identified following the session, which is informing ACSL's ongoing work. Some of these support needs were:

- provision of ongoing training and having practical resources to assist with identifying and responding to possible boundary issues;
- support to address the mental health of clergy; and
- finding suitable safeguarding representatives.

Providing professional development training to National Youth Leaders of Marist Youth Ministry

ACSL has had the opportunity to provide a range of support activities for Marist Youth Ministry (MYM). On the back of some practical support which included guidance on policy development, ACSL was asked to develop and deliver a workshop for 12 National Youth Leaders of Marist Youth Ministry.

The workshop focused on raising awareness to the types and indicators of abuse, and responding to abuse.

The workshop included scenarios to both identify types and possible instances of abuse and unpack appropriate responses from within MYM activities. Given the cohort of participants, most aged between 18-25, there was additional focus on grooming, and issues relating to the online environment. The session integrated regular MYM activities and linked to MYM policies and reporting procedures.

The group identified integrating information into practical and contextually relevant examples and discussions as being extremely beneficial, and that workshoping scenarios had been valuable. It was also noted that the information provided on the statistics of abuse and offenders was very helpful.

The follow-up review of the activity identified some further support needs, which is informing ACSL's ongoing work. Some of these needs were:

- provision of ongoing training and having practical resources to assist with identifying and responding to disclosures and concerns of abuse;
- further support to address the difference between historical and current abuse;
- further training on MYM safeguarding policies and procedures.

Marist Schools Australia – Using the NCSS as the starting point in a comprehensive approach to safeguarding children

With governance of 12 of schools in six Australian states and territories, each with different regulatory reporting requirements, ensuring that a governing body like Marist Schools Australia (MSA) has a consistent approach to safeguarding can be a challenge. For MSA, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) have helped to provide that consistency.

Elizabeth Gallagher, who heads up the Governance and Risk department for MSA with chief oversight of safeguarding implementation, says that adopting the NCSS was a concerted commitment on the part of MSA to strengthen their national approach to safeguarding within the Catholic Church in Australia

Since the establishment of Marist Schools Australia in 2011, a national framework for child safeguarding has been a priority, and prior to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission), MSA developed its own safeguarding standards. While the MSA standards were a first and necessary response, after the release of the NCSS Edition 1 MSA decided that being part of the one-Church approach was the most important way forward.

Each school under MSA's governance has a senior child safeguarding officer appointed and though each school operates in different contexts – some are boarding schools, some are high schools, and some operate from kinder to year 12 – each MSA school uses their state and territory regulation as well as the NCSS as the foundation for their safeguarding approach. Additionally, each school completes annual self-assessments against the NCSS through an online assessment portal.

The lack of harmony in safeguarding regulations and means that MSA has to respond to six different regulatory regimes. It's here that the NCSS has been a force in the safeguarding area:

"The NCSS have given us a consistent, well articulated and detailed standard that no matter what state or territory we are in, no matter how

big or small the schools is, whether it is a boarding school or something else – each of our schools has to meet the NCSS. That gives us a more consistent national approach to our safeguarding and has been written into our framework policies that apply to all of our schools," Elizabeth says.

MSA has made use of the mapping documents produced by ACSL to understand the relationship between NCSS criteria and state and territory legislative requirements. As well, resources that ACSL has curated through its website Resource Hub have been helpful in developing policies and procedures at the governance level, particularly in being able to see what best practice looks like in other Catholic organisations.

Safeguarding is of course always evolving, and there are always emerging challenges. In the school space peer on peer abuse is a growing area of concern, and online safety remains a crucial dimension of safeguarding in the 21st century.

Despite the challenges, Elizabeth says that in the years since the Royal Commission she has observed positive trends in a growing awareness of safeguarding as everyone's responsibility. There is also more willingness to talk openly about safeguarding incidents or near misses, and an associated motivation to learn from them.

Safeguarding is more culturally embedded now across the schools, some of which is a result of the effect of the Royal Commission which has resulted in more vigilance. One example of how safeguarding has become embedded is that safeguarding is now a standing conversation piece or agenda item at any meeting, whether that's a board meeting or a school leadership team meeting, which Elizabeth describes as a big win.

"Talking about safeguarding regularly means there's a constant conversation going on around how we're making sure our kids are safe, and I find that very heartening".

WORKING TOWARDS THE ADOPTION OF THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS, EDITION 2

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Ed. 2 (currently pending approval) create a framework for Catholic entities to promote the safety of children and adults at risk. Edition 1, released in May 2019 focuses on safeguarding practices to protect children, while Edition 2 incorporates care and protection of adults, with a focus on adults at risk, in keeping with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

2021-2022 saw a significant focus on re-drafting the NCSS for clarity, recontextualising with respect to Catholic Social Teaching and ensuring a strengths-based and rights-focused approach, seeking and evaluating feedback from Church entities on the draft text of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, Ed. 2 (NCSS Ed.2), and working towards consensus for adoption.

Redrafting to be plain English and reader friendly

In October 2021 ACSL reviewed the draft NCSS Ed. 2 for readability and consistency. In so doing we removed some duplicated indicators and focused on plain language to make the document more accessible.

Contextualising the Standards within Catholic Social Teaching and the theology of safeguarding

During the consultations on Edition 2 in 2020 and early 2021 some leaders told us that they felt the connection between the NCSS and core principles of Catholic Social Teaching needed to be made more explicit.

In redrafting Edition 2, we worked with Catholic Theological College to establish the theological underpinnings of the NCSS and collated preface material which brings to light the connection between the Standards and the Catholic Social Teaching principles of dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, and solidarity.

Briefings and surveys show support for NCSS Ed.2

From December 2021 to February 2022, ACSL facilitated **5** information sessions for Church Authorities to overview NCSS Ed.2 Draft 4 for adoption. **91** participants, including bishops, religious Leaders and MPJP trustees (including safeguarding personnel and member executive directors) discussed Ed. 2 and provided feedback in these sessions.

These sessions were complemented by an online survey seeking feedback on the Standards. There were **64** Responses (36% the identified Church Authority) to the national survey. As well as receiving constructive feedback, strong endorsement was given for NCSS Ed. 2 with 87% of participants and respondents providing in principle support to endorse the November draft.

A society-wide reckoning with abuse of power and protecting those most at risk

2021 and 2022 were again big years for Australian society at large grappling with revelations of abuse of power and an exploration of neglect and mistreatment in a range of settings involving adults at risk, including aged care and the disability sector.

NCSS Ed.2 incorporates the concept of safeguarding adults, in keeping with the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and initial learning from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

NCSS Ed.2's inclusion of adults at risk acknowledges that everyone has a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. Safeguarding adults at risk requires a person-centred approach, which encourages their full and effective participation and freedom to make their own choices in circumstances which are appropriate.

The Catholic Church in Australia is amongst the first in the world to tackle abuse of power by broadening safeguarding measures beyond children towards a focus on preventing the abuse of anyone who might be vulnerable.



As of the end of June 2022, **368** people had attended consultations on the NCSS Ed.2 and **171** people responded to surveys or submitted feedback on NCSS Ed.2 since consultations first began in 2020.

Zeroing in on indicators and key definitions

While overall support for NCSS Ed.2 has been evident across surveys and through consultations, certain indicators have resulted in further work needing to be carried out to reach agreement. Concerns around the change of requirement in Standard 5 from 6 to 10 hours of professional/pastoral supervision for clergy and religious raised concerns for some, and wording in Standard 6 concerning complaints management have meant that further consultation with ACSL's members has been necessary to reach resolution.

During the reporting period working groups conferred to refine crucial definitions such as 'ministry', discerning what is encompassed in the term and its practical implications for use within the NCSS.

Further work was also done during this period to further explain the reason for the shift in language away from 'vulnerable adults' to the more trauma-informed, strengths-based 'adults at risk'

Preparing leaders and safeguarding personnel for NCCS Ed.2

While at the end of the 2021-2022 reporting period the NCSS Ed. 2 have not yet been endorsed by ACSL's member bodies, ACSL has nonetheless proactively supported entities to become familiar with the requirements coming with Edition 2. From April-June 2022 ACSL ran three sessions on 'Making the Standards real in your organisation: What's new in Ed.2'. **59** Catholic leaders and operational staff attended these sessions which explored key definitions used in Ed.2, overviewed the major changes from the child-focused Ed. 1 to Ed. 2 which includes requirements for the protection of adults at risk, and unpacked the inclusive approach underpinning Ed.2.

Substantial work has also been undertaken to map the requirements of NCSS Ed.2 on to state, territory and Commonwealth legislation where applicable, to help Church leaders understand where there is overlap with the requirements of the NCSS and where the NCSS have unique requirements.

10 NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

1 COMMITTED LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE 	2 CHILDREN AND ADULTS ARE SAFE, INFORMED AND PARTICIPATE 
 <p><i>The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture.</i></p>	 <p><i>Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.</i></p>
3 PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES, CARERS AND COMMUNITIES 	4 EQUITY IS PROMOTED AND DIVERSITY IS RESPECTED 
 <p><i>Families, carers & communities are informed and involved in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults.</i></p>	 <p><i>Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.</i></p>
5 ROBUST HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT 	6 EFFECTIVE COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT 
 <p><i>People working with children and adults are suitable and supported to reflect safeguarding values in practice.</i></p>	 <p><i>Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities, and personnel.</i></p>
7 ONGOING EDUCATION AND TRAINING 	8 SAFE PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS 
 <p><i>Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and adults safe through information, ongoing education and training.</i></p>	 <p><i>Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.</i></p>
9 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT 	10 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SUPPORT THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS 
 <p><i>Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.</i></p>	 <p><i>Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.</i></p>



CONNECTING WITH THE WIDER SAFEGUARDING COMMUNITY

Our role with the Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group

ACSL has been a member of the National Office for Child Safety's Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group since its inception and is the primary Catholic representative to the National Office for Child Safety. This strategic stakeholder engagement and advisory group gives advice and shares information about what governments and organisations can do to keep children and young people safe and well.

The National Office established the Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group to assist the government to understand, through discussions and feedback, how they can better develop and deliver national initiatives that help keep children safe. These initiatives include rolling out the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations across organisations and communities that work with children and young people, and informing the development and now implementation of the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse.



The Child Safe Sectors Leadership Group also works together to promote and share information about how communities and organisations can improve child safety in practice.

Members of the group are representatives of national peak bodies and large national organisations that work with children and young people.

Participation in the NCCA Safe Church Network

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) Safe Church Network is a group of denominational representatives in areas of professional standards and safeguarding, who gather under the auspices of the National Council of Churches in Australia. Their purpose is:

- Encouraging the sharing of best practice, experience and resources, focused on learning and collaboration among Australian churches on safeguarding issues.
- Identifying shared areas of work, trends and patterns to help inform strategic planning for best practice.
- Contribute to collaborative professional development and networking opportunities.
- Sharing insights and resources about appropriate spiritual and pastoral responses that can contribute to the ongoing work of healing for individuals and communities.
- Providing the General Secretary advice on safeguarding priorities and initiatives for the benefit of all churches.
- Acting as a reference group for NCCA's Safeguarding responses.
- Acting as a channel by which NCCA can feed information to state and territory regulators and the National Office of Child Safety regarding trends, concerns and priorities.

The Catholic Church in Australia has had a long-standing association with the NCCA Safe Church Program.

This long history of working together over many years has included many joint initiatives to serve the faithful in our Australian Church communities. ACSL continues this tradition and is the Catholic representation on this ecumenical network. We look forward to continuing this partnership into the future to further strengthening ecumenical partnerships and developing capacity across all our Churches in Australia.

Meeting with the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People to discuss alignment of NCSS and the Victorian Child Safe Standards

In February 2022 ACSL met with representatives from the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People to discuss the transition from CPSL to ACSL and the development of NCSS Ed.2. This discussion was framed in light of the update to the Victorian Child Safe Standards, coming into effect 1 July 2022. The discussion was very beneficial and provided insight into ACSL's ongoing work regarding alignment of the NCSS with current statutory regimes, as well as paving the way to explore opportunities for mutual recognition of the NCSS with state regulators. The conversation also included updates on the Reportable Conduct Scheme and challenges the CCYP are facing regarding regulatory compliance. ACSL looks forward to further strengthening this relationship and working with the CCYP to better support Victorian Catholic entities as they respond to their statutory obligations and the NCSS.



ISC delegates in Rome

Participation in the International Safeguarding Conference in Rome in June 2022

The focus of the ISC this year was on Reporting Abuse: Obligations, Dilemmas, and Reality. Held annually in Rome, the Conference is an opportunity for safeguarding leaders throughout the Church across the world, to come together, hear from experts and share the challenges and innovations in safeguarding in Catholic communities, in a diverse range of geographical and social contexts.

In the lead up to the conference, ACSL's Director, Safeguarding & Improvement Daniele Donnini engaged in the conference as one of two Asia-Pacific Networking Group facilitators. In this role he facilitated meetings with individuals with safeguarding expertise across our geographical area, to share views, experiences and to contribute to the content of the conference. Daniele co-facilitated four meetings in the lead up to the conference on the broad topic of reporting of abuse, culminating in a report on the discussions and learnings to assist the event in Rome.

Representing ACSL in Rome, CEO Dr Ursula Stephens joined a small Australian contingent participating in the conference. Throughout the conference delegates heard how different countries have interpreted Vos Estis Lux Mundi, which was created following the Vatican Child Protection Summit in 2019, and also had many examples of the cultural challenges of applying strong safeguarding practices in countries where Christianity is not the dominant faith.

The Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, HE Chiara Porro hosted the delegates reception at her residence, with co-hosts the Ambassadors of the Netherlands, Ghana, Mexico and Timor-Leste. Addressing the delegates, Dr Stephens chose to highlight the parallel journeys of reconciliation, truth telling and restorative justice currently underway in Australia — journeys within the Church, and as a nation, seeking to honour the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which was presented to Pope Francis earlier in 2022 by Ambassador Porro and indigenous academic Theresa Ardler.



ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens, accompanied by Australian Ambassador to the Holy See HE Chiara Porro meets with Pope Francis in Rome

LOOKING AHEAD

We look forward to the adoption and release of NCSS Ed.2. A prime focus in this period will be supporting entities to understand and implement the new requirements of Edition 2. Our team is developing new learning experiences, including an online Learning Management System, to bring safeguarding training and awareness to a wider group of Church personnel. We are also looking at ways to foster communities of practice for professional standards and safeguarding professionals so they can more easily share their expertise and experiences of safeguarding successes and challenges.

Audit and Review

All organisations working with children need to have measures in place to protect the safety of children and young people they interact with. How do we know the safeguarding measures we put in place in our organisations are working effectively though? How do we identify the gaps in our processes which create risk for children and adults at risk in our organisations?

For the past three years, ACSL's audit and review program has sought to provide a means for Catholic entities to assess their implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) and identify areas for improvement.

While the mere mention of audit might cause apprehension for some, the ultimate goal of a safeguarding audit is to ensure that children and adults at risk are being protected from harm and are safe in their communities. ACSL's audit approach is cooperative and geared towards continuous improvement, so that entities can be assured that they are doing all they can, through their culture, systems and processes, to provide safe and nurturing environments for children, young people and adults at risk in their communities.

Entities who undertake audits with ACSL are not only showing their communities that the safety of children and adults at risk is their priority. By undertaking an audit, they also commit to publicly reporting the results of the audits. Through ACSL's public reporting of audit findings, entities embrace transparency and accountability and take the front foot in showing their communities that work is underway to create even safer spaces for those who are vulnerable.

Through our engagement with a wide range of Catholic entities, both big and small, we know how committed Catholic organisations are to implementing the NCSS and complying with their safeguarding obligations under Commonwealth and state or territory laws. The engagement the audit team had with Catholic entities over the last 12 months, and the audits we have completed, tells the story of a Church increasingly dedicated to creating communities safe for children and adults at risk.

AUDITS IN FY 2021-2022

In 2021-2022, 9 Catholic entities underwent an audit against the NCSS. Of these entities:

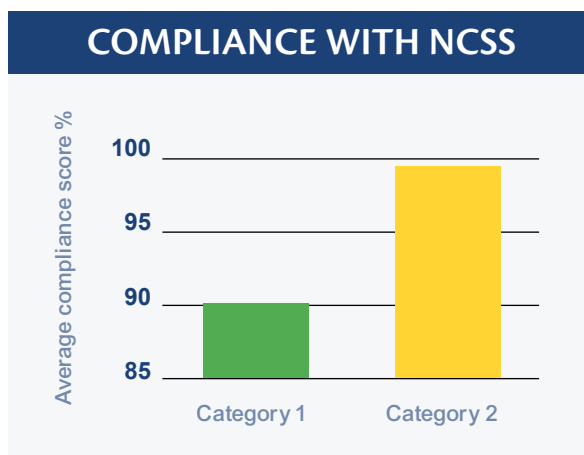
- 6 were groups of religious women:
 - Sisters of the Good Shepherd
 - Missionary Sisters of Service
 - Presentation Sisters of Western Australia
 - Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny in Australia
 - Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG)
 - Marist Sisters Australian Unit
- 2 were groups of religious men:
 - The Carmelites Australia and Timor-Leste
 - De La Salle Brothers District of Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, and
- 1 was a regional diocese – The Diocese of Toowoomba

"While the audit with its particular findings, recommendations and agreed actions certainly encourages us into more robust safeguarding practices, especially in the areas of improved risk management, one of its greatest benefits for us is that it normalises open discussion around abuse of children and adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding responses, in local communities. It reinforces the sense that all of us are responsible for safeguarding in our local communities."

- Audit participant

Three of these organisations were assessed as Category 1 entities, who work directly with children. These entities were audited against all 10 NCSS while six were assessed as Category 2 entities who have contact with children, and were subject to assessment against 7 of the NCSS.

All of the entities audited during this period achieved an NCSS compliance score of 85 per cent or above, with an average score of 96 per cent, demonstrating a strong commitment to the safety of children in these communities.



"The auditors were easy to work with, supportive and encouraging of our efforts and related well to the people with whom they interacted in the course of the audit."

- Audit participant

AUDIT PROFILE: Diocese of Toowoomba

Working with local leaders to embed safeguarding across a rural diocese

In 2021 the Diocese of Toowoomba in Queensland engaged ACSL to undertake a full audit of the diocese's safeguarding policies, practices and procedures in accordance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS). Through the initial scoping exercise, a sample of six parishes and three ministries were selected for site visits and interviews. The audit fieldwork took place in February 2022.

According to Fr Peter Dorfield, the Diocesan Executive Officer who oversees the safeguarding work of the diocese, the audit was an important step for the diocese and always something that was on the agenda and welcome.

The diocese is 'defined by its rural experience' and comprises thirty-seven parishes.

Twenty-two of these parishes have a resident priest; fifteen parishes share a priest with a nearby parish.

Long before the audit was planned the diocese had already instituted regular parish safeguarding visits to help local leadership personnel become more familiar with new safeguarding requirements through conversations about their local situations.

"It takes eight weeks to visit the parishes in the diocese, to have an intensive conversation about safeguarding with parish leadership personnel. This usually involves the Parish Priest or lay Parish Leader, the Parish Safeguarding Contact (which we've had set up in each community for some time), and the Chair of the Parish Council. In some parishes there are additional Leadership personnel: an Associate Priest, a retired Priest, a Parish Pastoral Associate, a Parish Secretary (full-time or part-time)," Fr Peter explains.

The drive from Toowoomba in the east of the diocese through to the western parishes of Charleville or Cunnamulla is a steady seven hour

drive, eight with a break or two. With the distances involved across the diocese, empowering local parish and ministry leaders to have the resources and knowledge to be effective safeguarding leaders in their home communities has been vital.

While the early rounds of parish visits took place before the audit in February 2021, for the selected six parishes and three ministries, they were also an effective way for them to prepare for the safeguarding audit process of interview. This helped local leadership personnel to understand that the safeguarding audit would not be about 'passing or failing', but rather that it would be an opportunity to have someone from outside assess their safeguarding processes and practices to affirm what was working well and to identify where there could be improvement. Both affirmations and improvements would then be constructive lessons to be shared with the rest of the diocese.

Following a desktop audit of the Diocese's overarching safeguarding policies and procedures, ACSL's auditor travelled with Fr Peter across the diocese, starting from the west and travelling east, visiting parishes and ministries to have in-person conversations with personnel who are responsible for safeguarding in their parishes, and to talk through current practices in depth.

Through the review of policies and procedures and interviews with personnel, ACSL found that the diocese had implemented, or was substantially progressed in the implementation of, eighty-seven per cent of the NCSS indicators (90 of 103) relevant to their operations. The audit generated seven recommendations for improvement in the diocese.

While Fr Peter says that there were no real surprises in the audit recommendations, they were all valued, welcomed and accepted by the diocese, with all recommendations now in the process of being implemented over the twelve months from audit completion.

"In rural dioceses with a practical bent, there are often sensible things that people do in everyday practice, guided by the Safeguarding Standards and lived experience, while not yet having the formal policy wording completely in place. However, we understand we need to have a range of well-developed policies to guide us in consistent action, both locally and across the diocese, and we're working on it. This is especially true of child-friendly versions of policies and resources."

"The audit also raised our awareness of the need for more developed risk assessment practices. While parish communities have been generally mindful of risks around the safety of children and vulnerable adults in parish activities and ministries, we have more work to do in making use of specific risk assessment procedures, including registers and reviews. The ACSL auditor was strong in helping us explore this area."

Following the release of the audit report, the diocese took the step of inviting ACSL's auditor to present an overview of the findings and recommendations of the report at a diocesan 'In-service' day in March 2022. Priests, lay Pastoral Leaders, Pastoral Associates and other key people involved in parish life, along with Diocesan Ministry Leaders, were invited to attend, with about 80 taking part in the day, as they formally received and accepted the diocesan audit report.

"It was quite constructive for us. Priests, Lay Leaders, Pastoral Associates, people involved in the life of parishes, those in diocesan ministries: providing a healthy cross-section of the diocese focused for a full day on the importance of the safeguarding ministry in all of our parishes and across our diocese."

Following the In-service day, Fr Peter embarked on another round of parish visits where he was able to further explore audit findings with individual parishes and have conversations about ACSL's recommendations for improvement.

"The audit opened up different conversations about safeguarding. General awareness has been heightened. Parishes and ministries are encouraged to speak more openly about safeguarding and child safety with a new level of understanding. It's becoming normal to have local conversations around safeguarding and sexual abuse. Our overall experience of the diocesan audit: affirming and constructive, positive and helpful."

As Fr Peter says, the audit is just one step, albeit very important and welcome, in the ongoing safeguarding journey of a diocese.



ACSL's Manager of Audit and Review Dr David Treanor meeting with representatives of St Mary's Parish in Goondiwindi as part of the safeguarding audit of the Diocese of Toowoomba.

DEFINING A NEW RISK-BASED REVIEW MODEL

ACSL's audit model, developed for NCSS Edition 1, has provided a solid foundation for robust assessment of safeguarding policies and processes.

As we plan for the introduction of Edition 2, ACSL has had the opportunity to reconsider the audit and review framework to ensure it is employing proportionate and risk-based review criteria.

In August 2021 an advisory group was formed to develop a risk-based review approach that would identify how an audit can be proportionate to the risk of harm, the size and scope of the entity, and its interaction with existing regulatory authorities. The risk-based approach endorsed by this group has focused on defining review pathways for entities based on their engagement in ministry, governance of activities, and a history of complaints.

ACSL's Audit Advisory Group

1. Sean Tynan, Director of Safeguarding, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
2. Joy Woods, Senior Project Coordinator Safeguarding Standards, Brisbane Catholic Education
3. Anne-Marie Corbett, Director of Governance and Risk, Centacare Brisbane
4. Anne Walker, National Executive Director, Catholic Religious Australia
5. Jennifer Lewis, Safeguarding Coordinator, Edmund Rice Ministries
6. Stephen Tiley, Chief Risk and Assurance Director, Mercy Health
7. Matt Peel, Manager Mission Integration, Pastoral Care & Volunteers, Calvary Ryde Retirement Community

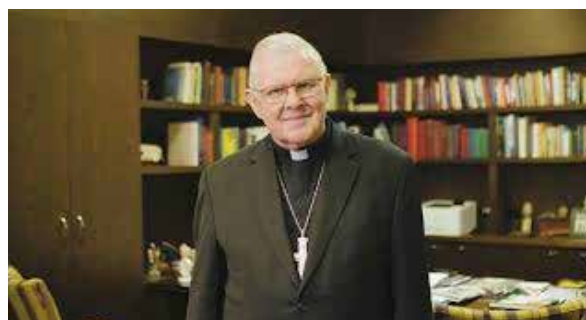
There are three pathways for review:

1. Self-report for Catholic entities not engaged in any ministry. This pathway is available to cloistered or enclosed orders or contemplative ministries or to entities whose members are not involved in any ministry.
2. ACSL limited review or peer-review for Catholic entities that are engaged in ministry, but do not have governance for the ministry conducted.
3. Audit for Catholic entities who are engaged in ministry and have governance of that ministry.

A three-year review cycle for growth and improvement

The Risk-based Audit and Review Framework works to assess practical safeguarding risks for individual entities. The framework takes into account the mission activity of the entity, the context in which it operates, and its current membership. This means that entities who undergo a self-assessment, review or audit are assessed against the NCSS criteria and indicators that directly relate to them.

Entities commit to a three-year cycle for review/audit to support continuous improvement and integrate new legislative requirements and emerging best practice.



Archbishop of Brisbane and President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Mark Coleridge launches the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal by video in May 2022

LAUNCH OF THE NCSS SELF-ASSESSMENT PORTAL

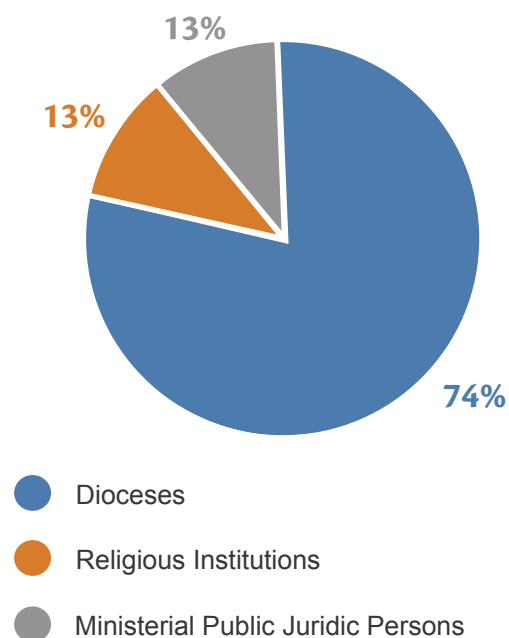
While a review or audit provides a detailed and objective assessment of an entity's safeguarding practices, a self-assessment is a vital tool that every Catholic entity can use to measure where their safeguarding strengths lie and find gaps in their systems which could be exposing children and adults at risk to harm.

To help all entities complete a self-assessment against the NCSS, ACSL has launched the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal. ACSL partnered with Breaking New Ground (BNG), a national company experienced with compliance and governance support for the community sector, to design the online self-assessment. Formally launched in April 2022, all Australian Catholic Church entities have been invited to use the portal and complete the self-assessment, free of charge.

Aligning with the new risk-based review and audit model, entities entering the portal are filtered, according to engagement in ministry, governance arrangements, and a history of complaints activity into the review stream most fitting for them – self-report, limited review or full audit. Once in these streams, entities can assess their entity's maturity in implementing the NCSS, as relevant to their entity, attach evidence to support their assessment, and receive an actionable list of items to address safeguarding gaps.

As of the end of June 2022, 20 entities had begun their self-assessment via the portal:

Entities completing self-assessments via the portal



DEVELOPING AN ACCREDITED EXTERNAL AUDITORS PANEL

To date, ACSL has been the only authorised NCSS auditor. The ACSL constitution allows for a choice of NCSS auditor, and ACSL has been working to enable this choice to occur, while ensuring there is a national, consistent approach to safeguarding across the Church. A working group was formed early in 2022, led by ACSL's Board Chair The Hon. Michael Lavarch AO to explore how an external auditor panel might operate.

In June 2022 ACSL asked Church Authorities for their views via a stakeholder survey. The results of the survey showed that:

- there is interest in ACSL establishing a panel of assessors who would be authorised to conduct safeguarding audits against the NCSS;
- convening a panel of assessors that have knowledge of Church governance, cultural and operational structures would be important factors;
- that ACSL should retain a scoping function for reviews and audits; and
- all audit reports continue to be reported publicly.

ACSL has used this feedback to develop a strategy for engaging external auditors that will still ensure a consistent approach in assessment of the NCSS. This work is ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2022-2023, convening the external auditors panel and developing external auditor training will allow ACSL to provide greater review and audit options to Catholic entities in Australia. With several reviews and audits scheduled for 2023, the audit team will continue to work with entities to prepare for their safeguarding audit. In 2023 we will continue to support entities to begin their self-assessments via the NCSS Self-Assessment Portal as the first step in their audit or review process, helping entities gain a clear safeguarding snapshot of their processes and systems.



Complaints Response

ACSL offers victims and survivors a place where they can seek advice and referrals to support services.

In March 2021 ACSL incorporated the complaints functions previously undertaken by the Australian Catholic Centre of Professional Standards.

The functions are:

1. Complaints under Vos Estis Lux Mundi — If requested, ACSL can assist to facilitate complaints management under the Vatican procedural Vos Estis Lux Mundi;
2. Complaints against a Church Authority — ACSL can provide an independent process for facilitating complaints against a Church Authority that are not captured by Vos Estis Lux Mundi (a Church Authority is a Bishop, Australian Major Superior or the Canonical Steward); and
3. Review of the outcome of a complaint managed by a Church Authority — ACSL can provide an independent review mechanism for complainants, respondents and Church Authorities for complaints managed under Professional and Safeguarding Standards.

Vos Estis Lux Mundi

Vos Estis Lux Mundi, or 'You are the light of the word' deals with the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse against minors by bishops in the Church. Issued by Pope Francis in 2019 and coming into effect in 2020 it sets out the requirement for dioceses across the globe to ensure there are processes in place to manage complaints against Church leaders.

ACSL's complaint functions are defined and specific in scope. The reason for this is that complaints and disclosure should always be made, in the first instance, to police and relevant authorities, directly to a Church entity and/or Church Authority, or to a State/Provincial Professional Standards Office (where relevant). ACSL's role is to provide an additional level of independence for complaints relating to Church Authorities, where we are requested to do so, and provide a review mechanism for complaints already managed by Church Authorities.

During the 2021-2022 financial year ACSL received many complaint enquiries. ACSL reviewed and assessed each enquiry to determine whether it had authority to take on the complaint or review. While ACSL only facilitated one complaint and two reviews to completion, we provided guidance and assistance to many complainants, victims/survivors, Church personnel, safeguarding officers and Church Authorities on a wide range of disclosures and complaint enquiries.

To ensure ACSL was able to manage its enquiries and complaints in a responsive and trauma-informed way, ACSL recruited a Complaints Response Officer in June 2022. The induction of Susan Whitehead, our new Complaints Response Officer into the team has allowed us to provide trauma-informed and timely responses to all enquiries while maintaining focus on the proactive development of protocols, policies and procedures in the complaints management space.

NEW NATIONAL REVIEW PANEL ESTABLISHED

The National Appeals and Review Panel was established in April 2022 by ACSL to facilitate reviews for complaints managed by Church Authorities.

The National Appeals and Review Panel consists of a Chairperson and Reviewers appointed by ACSL to conduct reviews in accordance with the National Response Protocol.

Reviews of previous complaint processes can be requested by complainants, respondents and/or Church Authorities.

After a full review of the National Reviews Panel, the National Appeals and Review Panel Policy was developed and implemented to establish and ensure strong governance of the ongoing review mechanism facilitated by ACSL.

In 2022-2023 ACSL and the National Appeals and Review Panel will focus on refining its procedures, increasing its members and engaging with key stakeholders to ensure that review mechanisms are embedded in complaints processes in accordance with the National Response Protocol, procedural fairness and natural justice.

CHURCH PROTOCOLS – DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK AND UPDATING OF THE NATIONAL RESPONSE PROTOCOL

While the National Response Protocol was adopted by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in November 2020, it was not formally adopted by Catholic Religious Australia or the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons. To increase national consistency in the Church's response to concerns and allegations of abuse, ACSL developed the National Response Framework.

While the National Response Protocol provides detailed principles and procedures, guidelines and canon law guidance, the National Response Framework was designed as an overarching framework consisting only of high-level principles and procedures. As of June 2022, ACSL is working with ACBC, CRA and the AMPJP to have the National Response Framework adopted.

By developing and utilising both the National Response Protocol and the National Response Framework, all Catholic entities will be committed to the same principles and procedural framework with allowance for detailed procedures to be reflective of local differences in each entity. This will ensure a more consistent approach across Australia, and reflects the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Following changes to Canon Law Chapter 6, minor changes were made to the National Response Protocol to incorporate vulnerable adults. These were approved and adopted by the ACBC in May 2022. The ACBC also approved a full review of the National Response Protocol to commence in July 2023.

National Response Protocol	National Response Framework
The National Response Protocol is a framework for Catholic entities across Australia to respond consistently to people raising concerns or allegations of child abuse. The National Response Protocol outlines principles and procedures to offer a consistent response to children and adults who have been subjected to abuse by Church personnel.	The National Response Framework outlines the high-level principles and procedures underpinning response to allegations of child abuse.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST CHURCH AUTHORITIES – WORKSHOPPING THE COMPLEXITIES WITH CHURCH AUTHORITIES THEMSELVES

In May 2022 ACSL met with several Church Authorities to consider the management of complaints against Church Authorities. The aim of the workshop was to understand the challenges faced when managing a complaint against a Church Authority and begin to work towards developing an internal Church protocol for the management of such complaints.

In the next financial year ACSL will engage with more key stakeholders, with the goal of preparing a draft protocol for managing complaints against Church Authorities. This protocol would operate alongside *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* by providing local procedures where relevant, and seek to establish a process that provides natural justice, procedural fairness and consistency to complainants, victims/survivors, and the accused.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In late 2021 ACSL facilitated a series of stakeholder sessions to workshop the requirements of a custom Complaints Management System, to be developed by IT solutions provider Infoxchange. This project responds to the lack of, or extensive use of sub-par, complaints management systems (such as email and excel) within Church entities, the desire to increase the consistency in responding to allegations and complaints, and the lack of national complaints data and trend analysis capabilities.

Church Authorities and safeguarding personnel were invited to attend stakeholder sessions to discuss the requirements for a Complaints Management System which could be used by Church entities. The Complaints Management System is intended to:

- enable accurate future management of complaints, enquiries and requests for information related to professional standards and safeguarding complaints;
- increase consistency in the Catholic Church's response to complaints; and
- build a reliable statistical database of complaints and investigations to enable trend analysis, proactive risk mitigation strategies and reporting.

Since the stakeholder sessions ACSL has continued to work with InfoXchange to develop a design brief.

In the next financial year ACSL will consider feedback from Church entities and Church Authorities to ascertain the next steps in the proposed development of the Complaints Management System.



Director, Complaints Response Karen Mosley and CEO Dr Ursula Stephens presenting at a seminar for new bishops in February 2022

ACCESS TO RECORDS – NSW/ACT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OFFICE

On 1 October 2021 ACSL entered into a Record Management Agreement (Agreement) with the Province of Sydney and Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn and Catholic Religious Australia. The purpose of the agreement is to enable ACSL to hold and manage the Towards Healing and Intelligence Records (together 'Records') of the former NSW/ACT Professional Standards Office (NSW/ACT PSO).

In keeping with the Agreement, ACSL is responsible for receiving and actioning all requests for access to the Records including file requests, privacy requests and subpoenas.

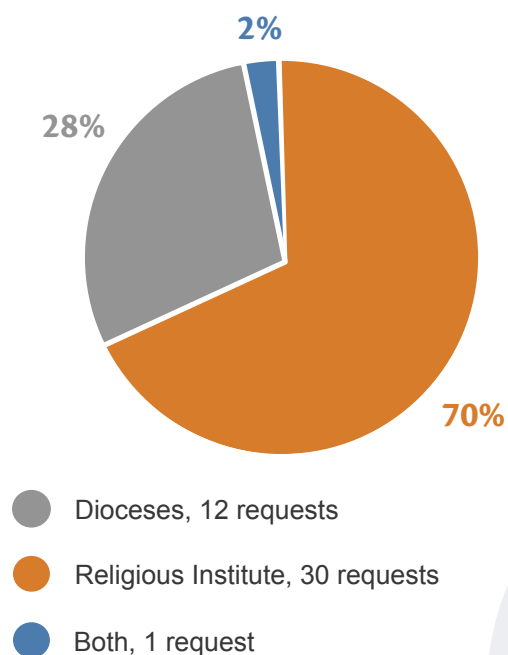
Between 1 October 2021 and 30 June 2022 ACSL received and managed 43 requests for information as follows:

Request Type	No. Requests
Subpoena	33
File Request	8
Privacy Request	2

The requests for information relate to a person associated with a diocese, a religious institute or both. Here is the breakdown of information requests by entity type:

Entity Type	No. Requests
Religious Institute	30
Diocese	12
Both	1

Type of Entity





Australian Catholic Ministry Register

The Australian Catholic Ministry Register (ACMR, or the Register) exists to assist Church entities and clergy and religious in complying with the requirements around movement for ministry under standard 5.7.1 of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

When clergy or religious perform ministry in another diocese or a different community interstate, for instance, to minister at a wedding, it is important that the incoming Church Authority is aware that the individual is safe to perform ministry.

Having an ACMR ID allows holders to demonstrate their identity and good standing without the need for one-time paperwork for each trip. Along with benefits in standardisation, this allows all parties to comply with the requirements easily, and significantly reduces administrative burdens for safeguarding personnel and other staff.

In the last reporting period, the Australian Catholic Ministry Register was formally brought into ACSL. Although ACSL took on responsibility for the ACMR in early 2021, as of the beginning of the last financial year it remained almost entirely unintegrated. During the last year the ACMR has been overhauled and integrated into ACSL technically, in its branding and identity, additional features have been added to the ACMR, and ACSL has created fresh forms and explanatory materials to improve the user experience for those who rely on the ACMR.

OVERHAUL AND INTEGRATION TO MAKE THE SYSTEM SAFER

The second half of 2021 saw the integration and redevelopment of the ACMR database into ACSL's existing Dynamics database. This work was critical to overcome major known risks in the inherited solution which was custom built on a limited, outdated and unsupported infrastructure. These weaknesses left the inherited system vulnerable to attack and posed a material risk of total loss of function or data.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES TO SUPPORT SAFEGUARDING CAPABILITY

During the redevelopment of the ACMR, a range of additional features, identified during an earlier stakeholder engagement process, were added. These include:

- an enhanced verification portal which enables a person to verify the status of an ACMR ID;
- distribution of ACMR ID Holder lists to each entity, which is intended to help entities in monitoring the ACMR data and keeping it up to date;
- an annual affirmation of the ACMR ID Holder lists (commencing in the 2022-2023 financial year),
- enforcement of the Working With Children Check policy, which results in an ACMR ID being disabled if their recorded WWCC expiry date passes (commencing in the 2022-2023 financial year); and
- streamlined automated processes to reduce manual administrative work.

FRESH FORMS AND EXPLANATORY MATERIALS

A suite of forms and other materials were launched in 2021 to replace legacy materials and provide more detailed guidance for personnel in entities using the ACMR.

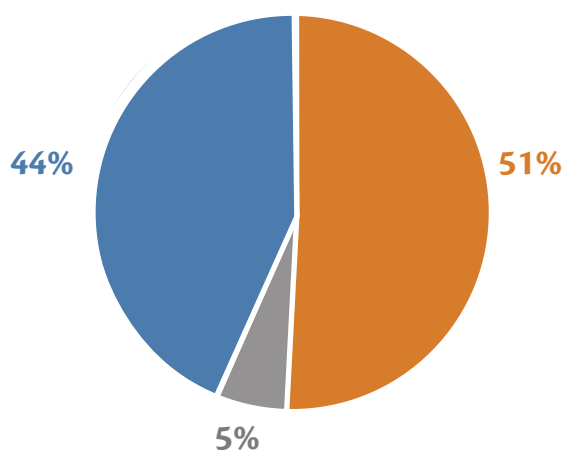
These materials, particularly the improved forms and new Procedures Guide were well received. In addition to a lot of positive feedback, we have observed a significant reduction in paperwork errors from those submitting ACMR applications and updates, and an associated decline in time spent correcting these. These materials are hosted on a dedicated ACMR section of ACSL's new website, which has also made them easier to locate for users.

ACMR PERFORMANCE

Despite a period of significant change and development for the ACMR, we experienced continued growth in the use of the ACMR and an improvement of the currency of its data. The data shows that the system is actively used, illustrated by the number of changes/updates performed by ACSL (2,295), and the use of the restriction status (15 restrictions and 6 removals of restrictions), and an overall increase in ACMR ID Holders by 4.3%.

As at 30 June 2022 the entities using the ACMR included:

Type	Number
No. of Dioceses & Eparchies	35
No. of Religious Institutes	44
No. of Male Religious Institutes	40
No. of Women Religious Institutes	4
Total No. of Entities	79



- Male Religious Institutes
- Women Religious Institutes
- Dioceses & Eparchies

As at 30 June 2022 the ACMR ID Holders consisted of:

Type	Number
No. of Clergy	
Priests	2463
Deacon/Sub-Deacon	166
Bishop/Archbishop	67
Sub Total	2696
No. of Religious	
Men	223
Women	55
Sub Total	278
No. of Seminarians	37
Total No. of ACMR ID Holders	3011

As at 30 June 2022 the statuses of ACMR ID Holders were:

Type	Number
Approved	2665
Restricted	40
Laicised	3
Resigned/Retired	53
No longer part of the Church Entity (LCE)	143
Deceased	96
Other	11



Between 30 September 2021 and 30 June 2022 ACSL actioned the following ACMR requests:

Type	Number
Records Updates (e.g change to status, update or change WWCC details)	2295
New male ACMR ID Holders	74
New women religious ACMR ID Holders	55
Restrictions (where a Church Authority can no longer declare every aspect of the Safeguarding Statements)	15
Removal of Restrictions	6

ACMR HIGHLIGHT

A major achievement for ACSL this year was the formal inclusion of women religious into the ACMR. As at 30 June 2022 four women's orders have registered to use the ACMR with 55 women religious now holding an ACMR ID.



The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (ISMAPNG) was the first women's order to register to use the ACMR since the formal inclusion of women religious, registering in early June 2022. At the end of June 2022 a total of 37 ISMAPNG sisters were registered and assigned an ACMR ID, representing 67% of women religious ACMR ID Holders.

"The ACMR application process is simple and assists us to comply with the National Standards" – ISMAPNG

Community Engagement & Communications

Throughout 2020-2021 ACSL sought to keep Catholic entities and sector safeguarding partners informed and involved with ACSL's work through direct correspondence, public communications, and speaking engagements.

NEWSLETTERS AND E-BULLETINS

Through 12 editions of ACSL's monthly e-newsletter and one special e-bulletin we provided updates to 3,032 subscribers on key projects and shared new safeguarding resources from regulators and safeguarding experts.

In 2021, to coincide with the launch of new Australian Catholic Ministry Register materials we also began sending special e-bulletins to ACMR contacts and delegates to keep them updated on changes to the ACMR. Four ACMR updates were sent to this group in 2021-2022.

MEDIA RELEASES

We also communicated more broadly with Catholic and mainstream media through media releases about reaching safeguarding milestones, significant project work and the results of safeguarding audits:

- *Australia Catholic Safeguarding Ltd publishes 20th and 21st Safeguarding Audit Reports of Australian Church entities, 13 August 2021*
- *Commitment to safeguarding in overseas ministries among significant findings of De La Salle Brothers safeguarding audit reports, 16 September 2021*
- *Diocese of Toowoomba demonstrates strong safeguarding commitment and inclusive approach, 23 March 2022*
- *ACSL launches new safeguarding portal for Australian Church entities, 29 April 2022*
- *Collaboration key to safeguarding approach across Carmelite Fathers ministries, 26 May 2022*



ACSL Newsletter

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND VISITS WITH CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

As well as formal consultation opportunities and organised safeguarding training, ACSL had a public voice in the Church and wider community through visits to Catholic entities and speaking engagements:

August 2021

- ACSL participated in the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand's 54th Annual Conference, where several changes concerning safeguarding for the global Church coming into effect in December 2021 were discussed.
- ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens delivered a keynote at the Mission: One Heart, Many Voices Conference in 2021. In her keynote, Dr Stephens reflected on leading mission through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching to ensure that people remain at the centre of care.
- Dr Stephens also delivered the annual Blackfriars Lecture through the Australian Catholic University, speaking on the topic of leadership in times of change.

November 2021

- Members of ACSL's leadership team joined the November Bishops Plenary to discuss safeguarding developments within the Church and address the National Response Protocol.

December 2021

- ACSL's Director, Complaints Response Karen Mosley presented at the MyKludo Virtual Investigations Conference on the topic of complaints management within the Church.

February 2022

- ACSL was invited to present an overview of its work at a seminar for new bishops, providing an opportunity for new leaders to ask important questions about ACSL's responsibilities.



Ursula Stephens presents at the 2021 ANU Blackfriars Lecture

March 2022

- ACSL's Executive Team met with the NSW Professional Standards Community of Practice.
- Dr David Treanor, our Manager, Audit and Review travelled to Toowoomba to present audit findings from Diocese of Toowoomba audit to key personnel across ministries and parishes in the diocese.

May 2022

- ACSL's Manager, Audit and Review gave a presentation to the Maronite Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania in Sydney overviewing the NCSS and the audit process.
- ACSL's CEO met with the Permanent Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to discuss the work of ACSL and to hear from them, some of the challenges they experience as Church Authorities in their safeguarding responsibilities.



From left: Bishop Anthony Randazzo, Archbishop Patrick O'Regan, Bishop Robert McGuckin, President of the ACBC Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Vice President Archbishop Anthony Fisher, ACSL Board Chair the Hon. Michael Lavarch AO, ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop Peter Comensoli and Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay OLM.

LAUNCH OF THE NEW WEBSITE

In November 2021 ACSL launched a new website to provide updated information on the safeguarding services we provide to Catholic entities in Australia. The new website houses information on the newer functions of ACSL, including our complaints response remit, with detailed information about reporting pathways and support services for victims and survivors.

Our Resource Hub, with ACSL developed tools and guides, examples of good safeguarding practice from a range of Church entities and resources collected from sector leaders, has also been revamped to help entities easily find tools to support their implementation of the NCSS.



ADVISORY GROUP TO GUIDE WRITING OF DRAFT CODE OF SAFETY FORMED

In August 2018, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia accepted Recommendation 16.49 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that ‘codes of conduct in religious institutions should explicitly and equally apply to people in religious ministry and to lay people’ and undertook to review Integrity in Ministry for clergy and religious and Integrity in the Service of the Church for laity.

In October 2021 ACSL established an advisory group to guide the writing of a national code for all Catholic ministries and services.

Through to the end of the reporting period, the Advisory Group crafted the working draft, ‘Our Common Mission’.

The text draws on Second Vatican Council and contemporary Vatican documents as well as human rights documents to distil the synodal themes of mission, communion and participation for contemporary readers. The working draft was released for consultation outside of this reporting period and is currently being revised in feedback to consultation.

Advisory group members

Sr Veronica Hoey SGS – *Chair*

Dr Jane Comensoli

Dr David Leary OFM

Sr Ailsa MacKinnon RSM

Rev Dr Jake Mudge

Dr Ursula Stephens – *CEO ACSL*

Ms Julie Thorpe - *Writer*

Our Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors have experience and credentials in child and adult safeguarding, professional standards, law, governance, Church administration, and finance and management. The ACSL Board met eight times in the reporting period.



PROF THE HON MICHAEL LAVARCH AO

LLB

Michael has had extensive involvement in Australian public life, serving in local government before being elected to Federal Parliament in 1987, serving as Attorney General in the Keating Government from 1993-1996.

Since leaving Parliament in 1996, Michael has been the secretary general of the Law Council of Australia, dean of Law at QUT and, since 2012, Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner, Risk, Intelligence and Regulatory Support at the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

Michael has worked with organisations supporting child welfare programs including the Forde Foundation which was established by the Queensland Government in response to the findings into the abuse of children in Queensland institutions.

Michael is currently Chair of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman Ltd and Chief Adjudicator with the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code Adjudication Panel.



MRS MARY MCCOMISH *(Resigned on 30/06/2022)*

LLB, LLM

Mary McComish has a background in commercial law and human rights. She has degrees from the University of WA and London University.

Mary was the foundation Assistant Dean of the Law School at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle and served as Dean until 2008.

She was the Director of Daydawn Advocacy Centre from 2009 to 2013. She has been a Commissioner of the WA Gaming Commission and a Referee of the WA Small Claims Tribunal. Since retirement Mary has been very involved in the governance of PJPs.



DR ROBYN MILLER

PhD, MFT, GradDipFT, BSocSc (Social Work)

Robyn brings over 30 years' experience in community services, local government and child protection sectors, and has practised in both the public and private sectors as a therapist, clinical supervisor, consultant and lecturer.

From 2006-15 Robyn provided professional leadership as the chief practitioner within the Department of Human Services in Victoria, was a member of the Victorian Child Death Review Committee for 10 years and worked as a consultant with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Since 2016, Robyn has been the CEO of MacKillop Family Services, which provides specialist services to vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and their families in Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.



MR DAVID PENNY

*BHS (Management), MB (General), MA (Pastoral Theology),
Cert IV (Assessment and Training)*

David is currently Executive Leader Operations ISMAPNG (The Institute of Sisters of Mercy Australia and Papua New Guinea). Prior to this David held executive roles within the Diocese of Broken Bay and Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes.

He has significant experience in the management and governance of the not-for-profit organisations including the Centre for Christian Spirituality, Broken Bay Institute and Calvary Health Care. David is currently a Trustee Director of Calvary Ministries. In 2017 David was the project manager of the task force which established Catholic Schools NSW.

David holds degrees and diplomas in Health Science and Administration. He completed the Intensive Executive Management Program for Non-Profit Leaders at Stanford University, CA, USA in 2004. David has a Master's degree in Management and a Masters degree in Pastoral Theology at Heythrop College, London University, UK.



ACSL AGM held online via Zoom, November 2021



SR KATH TIERNEY RSM AO

B Bus.

Sr Kath Tierney rsm AO has been a Sister of Mercy for 45 years and during this time was in ministry in Child and Family Welfare for 19 years. Following roles in the welfare sector, Kath was elected to the position of Congregation Leader for the Sisters of Mercy, Melbourne Congregation, and served two terms (12 years), concluding in this position in December, 2011.

From 2012-2014, Kath was engaged by the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne and worked in the area of Professional Standards, Conduct, Ethics and Investigation. From 2014-2019, Kath was engaged by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne as Senior Advisor to the Vicar General.

Kath has also been engaged in consultancy roles in professional standards, education, health and welfare and currently serves on a number of Boards, Advisory Boards and Committees within the Catholic sector.



MR JULIAN WIDDUP

BEC, FAICD, FIAA

Julian Widdup has been a director of ASX-listed, international and unlisted Australian companies in various industries including airports, power utilities, port corporations, financial services, superannuation, healthcare, education and the public sector. Julian has a strong background in finance and risk management, having held executive leadership roles with Palisade Investment Partners, Access Capital Advisers and previously worked with the Australian Government.

Julian is a fully qualified actuary, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has a Bachelor of Economics and Master of Business Administration from ANU.

Our Members

ACSL is a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity in Australia.

Our mandate is to support Catholic entities to create a safe Church for everyone. The establishment of ACSL is part of the Church leadership's commitment to doing all in its power to ensure that abuse, in any form, should never again occur in the Catholic Church in Australia.

Our Board of Directors are responsible for the strategic directions of ACSL.

Sitting alongside our Board of Directors, ACSL's three member organisations support and advise the Board. They are the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (AMPJP), the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA).

Our governance arrangements are outlined in our company's constitution, available on our website.

ACSL MEMBER REPRESENTATIVES

ACSL Member Representatives met with ACSL's Board of Directors on three occasions in the 2021-22 financial year.

The Member Representatives for ACSL are:

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

- Most Rev Michael McCarthy DD, Bishop of Rockhampton
- Most Rev Gregory Bennet MS STL, Bishop of Sale
- Mr Henry Pruyn, Secretary, NSW/ACT Bishops

Catholic Religious Australia

- Sr Eveline Crotty RSM, Institute Leader, Sisters of Mercy - Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea
- Fr Tom McDonough CP, Provincial, Passionist Fathers (Chair)

Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons

- Ms Eva Skira AM, Trustee Chair, St John of God Health Care



Our Staff



URSULA STEPHENS
Chief Executive Officer



DANIELE DONNINI
Director, Safeguarding & Improvement



KAREN MOSLEY
Director, Complaints Response



DAVID TREANOR
Manager, Audit & Review



NICOLE YOUNG
Executive Support Manager



SUSAN WHITEHEAD
Complaints Response Officer



LLYWELLYN O'BRIEN
Manager, Information & Systems



KATHERINE BEAVIS
Manager, Community Engagement & Communications



MAREE CHARNLEY
Senior Payroll & Finance Officer

With thanks to staff who ended their employment in 2021-2022:

Tania Stegemann
Director, Risk, Audit & Review

Concise Financials

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Income		
Members Contribution/Levy	1,790,000	1,351,500
Service Income	232,389	266,694
Interest Received	26	62
Other Income	-	295,450
	2,022,415	1,913,706
Expenses		
Cost of rendering services	(205,028)	(126,337)
Administration expense	(374,706)	(296,539)
Employee benefits expense	(1,179,236)	(1,119,038)
Director fees & related costs	(170,061)	(250,259)
Depreciation and amortisation	(87,464)	(107,317)
Finance costs	(193)	(912)
	(2,016,688)	(1,900,402)
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	5,727	13,304
Other comprehensive income		
Other comprehensive income for the year (net of tax)	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	5,727	13,304

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	2022 \$	2021 \$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	724,165	802,457
Trade and other receivables	40,384	51,652
Other Assets	12,437	5,896
Right-of-use assets	8,783	25,072
Total current assets	785,769	885,077
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	-	-
Total non-current assets	-	-
Total assets	785,769	885,077
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	137,392	243,896
Provisions	39,479	39,298
Lease liabilities	8,818	10,233
Total current liabilities	185,689	293,427
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	11,039	8,336
Total non-current liabilities	11,039	8,336
Total liabilities	196,728	301,763
Net assets	589,041	583,314
Equity		
Accumulated funds	589,041	583,314
Total equity	589,041	583,314



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING LTD

A safe Church for everyone

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