



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
**WOLLONGONG**

# Catholic Diocese of Wollongong

## Safeguarding Audit Report

### November 2025

National Catholic  
Safeguarding Standards

Report prepared by:



*A safe Church for everyone*

**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.**

This report is available on the [ACSL website](#).

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## Foreword

Safeguarding certification by ACSL is an independent recognition that a religious entity and its ministries meet the requirements of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. Certification achievement is measured against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards set by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia as the minimum benchmark for providing a safe Church for everyone. Compliance with the Standards is demonstrated through an independent assessment.

NCSS Certification:

- Provides independent recognition that the religious entity is committed to safeguarding.
- Fosters a culture of quality and continuous improvement.
- Reduces and mitigates safeguarding risks.
- Provides the community with confidence that the Church is taking action to address past abuse.
- Fosters a systematic approach to safeguarding quality and performance.
- Increases capability and safeguarding capacity.
- Complies with regulatory requirements, and, where relevant, established canonical requirements.

The following report is based on an independent assessment of the Diocese of Wollongong (ACSL entity identifier D029) performance against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. The report includes compliance level ratings for each standard, criteria, and indicator, and includes explanatory notes for key findings.

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the Diocese of Wollongong and its representatives at the time of the assessment and where applicable any further subsequent information the Diocese has supplied through the reporting process.

Certification issued by ACSL and/or its accredited auditors relates to safeguarding practices. It does not guarantee the safety, quality or acceptability of a participating organisation, its services or programs, or that legislative and funding requirements are being, or will be, met for other purposes.

# TO THE MEMBERS OF DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

## Opinion

ACSL has undertaken a safeguarding audit of a sample of parish and Diocesan leadership and Safe Communities office activities of Diocese of Wollongong. This audit comprises an analysis of their NCSS Self-Assessment, interviews with Diocesan personnel and follow up conversations. ACSL considers that the audit evidence obtained from Diocese of Wollongong is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for this opinion.

In ACSL's opinion, the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Audit Report for the Diocese of Wollongong offers a true and fair view of the Diocese's safeguarding policies, procedures and processes as at 3 October 2025 and of its performance against the NCSS for the period ended on that date.

ACSL is independent of the Diocese of Wollongong in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to this audit. The professional obligations and ethical requirements imposed on members are based on the five fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour in the Code.

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the Diocese of Wollongong and its representatives at the time of the assessment and, where applicable, any subsequent information the Diocese of Wollongong has supplied through the reporting process.

Certification issued by ACSL and/or its accredited auditors does not guarantee the safety, quality or acceptability of a participating organisations, its services or programs, or that legislative and funding requirements are being, or will be, met.

Signed:



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Dr Ursula Stephens  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd



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Dr David Treanor  
Director, Safeguarding and Compliance  
Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd

Date:

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Context

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) was established in 2020, to bring together the work of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd, the Australian Catholic Centre for Professional Standards and the Australian Catholic Ministry Register. ACSL is a company limited by guarantee, whose membership is composed of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia, and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons.

ACSL is committed to fostering a nationally consistent culture of safety and care throughout the Catholic Church in Australia. This includes providing a range of services to support the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), a framework for the protection and care of children and adults at risk. ACSL maintains the NCSS, undertakes audits and reviews of Church entities, and publishes reports which demonstrate a Church entity's commitment to the NCSS.

ACSL's core values are leadership, integrity and compassion. These values guide the way we work and inform cultural change within the Catholic Church and the wider community. We take our duty to care for and protect all children and adults at risk seriously and have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles). The National Principles are derived from the Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) which relate specifically to child safety. The Office of the Children's Guardian considers that organisations in NSW that are implementing the National Principles will be simultaneously implementing the Child Safe Standards.

The NCSS give effect to the National Principles and are the way that the Catholic Church is responding to the recommendation of the Royal Commission that religious organisations adopt and implement the Child Safe Standards. The NCSS are designed to contextualise the National Principles and Child Safe Standards to the Catholic Church in Australia. For more information about the NCSS please see: [National Catholic Safeguarding Standards - Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd \(acsltd.org.au\)](https://www.acsltd.org.au/national-catholic-safeguarding-standards).

This audit report includes the results of the assessment against the NCSS for the Diocese of Wollongong.

## 1.2 Background

The Diocese of Wollongong covers the Illawarra, Macarthur, Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven regions of New South Wales with 27 parishes. Established as a Diocese in 1951, St Francis Xavier Cathedral is the seat of Bishop Brian Mascord, installed on the 22 February 2018.

The vision of the Diocese is for all personnel to be Bearers of Christ's Love. The mission is that everyone will encounter the love and mercy of the Father through Jesus Christ, be accompanied by a community of believers and be equipped to share that encounter with others in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Within the Office of the Bishop, the Diocese of Wollongong established the Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding (OPSS) in 2017. OPSS is focused on relationship-based collaboration with the ministries, parishes and religious communities within their Diocese. There is a commitment to openness and accountability within OPSS and across the Diocese.

### 1.3 Audit classification

The Diocese of Wollongong has been assessed by ACSL as a Church entity needing to undertake the full NCSS audit. There are 10 NCSS Standards, 48 NCSS Criteria and 104 NCSS Indicators that apply to full audit entities. For further details of the risk-based audit framework, refer to the [ACSL website](#).

Our assessment of the Diocese of Wollongong compliance with the NCSS indicators is detailed in Section 2 of this report. Our recommendations for improvement, including the Diocese of Wollongong management responses, are included in Section 3 of this report.

The full audit report is also publicly available on the Publications and Reports page of the [ACSL website](#).

### 1.4 Audit approach

The purpose of the NCSS is to build a culture of shared responsibility for safeguarding and to ensure that policies, practices, and codes of behaviour work together to prevent, detect, and respond appropriately to potential or actual incidents of child abuse.

The National Catholic Safeguarding Standards are interrelated and interdependent. They work together to ensure every entity, ministry, and organisation across the Catholic Church in Australia places the safety of children and adults at risk at the core of how they plan, think and act. The 10 Standards are grouped into four capability areas according to common safeguarding principles. The four capability groupings and how they work together holistically are represented below:



The audit processes undertaken are intended to provide reasonable assurance that safeguarding controls have been designed appropriately and are operating effectively. Therefore, this report provides a point-in-time assessment of the safeguarding practices implemented by the Diocese of Wollongong and the extent to which they meet the requirements of the NCSS.

ASCL audit processes integrate The International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing (IIA Standards) which are developed by the Global IIA and followed by all IIA members in Australia. These Standards include principles and requirements for undertaking professional and internal auditing and for evaluating internal audit performance.

ACSL utilises an efficient risk assessment mechanism that permits its auditors to focus on risks that are proportionate to the purpose, size, complexity, and structure of a Church Authority. This approach to planning audits ensures optimum use of the Church Authority's limited resources, has maximum impact on the activities, ministries, and parishes, and ensures constant stakeholder engagement. It is also congruent with the IIA Standards.

ACSL assesses the risk management safeguarding practices of a Church Authority through a multilayered system keeping in mind IIA Standard 2010.A1 which states: "The internal audit (here meaning the Church Authority) activity's plan of engagements must be based on a documented risk assessment, undertaken at least annually. The input of senior management and the board must be considered in this process." ACSL can therefore provide objective assurance that the Church Authority is complying with the risk management components of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS).

## 1.5 In scope assessment

In this audit, the Diocese of Wollongong was assessed against Edition 2 of the NCSS, covering both children and adults at risk. In October 2025, ACSL completed a desktop review of the Diocese of Wollongong NCSS Self-Assessment, which the Diocese of Wollongong completed to present evidence of their congruency with the NCSS. Fieldwork was conducted from Tuesday October 28 until Thursday October 30, 2025. Seven parishes were chosen as site visits by ACSL. The Auditors also interviewed The Bishop and senior Officer within the Chancery, and those working in safeguarding related roles. This report was completed in November 2025.

The audit scope included:

- Professional Standards activities at the Office of the Bishop administrative centre.
- Interviews, observations, and enquiry with the Diocesan leadership.
- A review of key safeguarding documents, policies, and procedures.
- Assessment of the design and testing of the operation of safeguarding controls implemented by the Diocese.
- Site visits to the following parishes: Camden, Corpus Christi, Lumen Christi Wollongong, Milton, Rosemeadow, Shellharbour and West Wollongong/Unanderra.
- Interviews with over 20 personnel – inclusive of clergy, people in paid roles, safeguarding volunteers and parishioners.

Declarations of Assurance from CatholicCare Diocese of Wollongong and Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong were received by ACSL, therefore the audit scope excluded these Catholic agencies of the Diocese.

## 2. Overarching findings

*This Safeguarding Audit of the Diocese of Wollongong indicates that the Diocese is committed to continuing its efforts to implement and embed a culture of safeguarding throughout its organisation and is compliant with NSW and national legislation and regulation relating to safeguarding children and adults at risk.*

Our assessment indicates that the Diocese of Wollongong has fully implemented or has substantially progressed in the implementation of 68 (69%) of the relevant indicators to their operations. Assessment for each maturity scale is as follows:

- 46 indicators are developed and embedded
- 22 indicators are substantially progressed.
- 24 indicators are in the initial stages of implementation
- 7 indicators have not yet commenced implementation.

Of the 104 NCSS indicators applicable to full audited Church Authorities, 5 of these are not relevant to the Diocese of Wollongong operations.

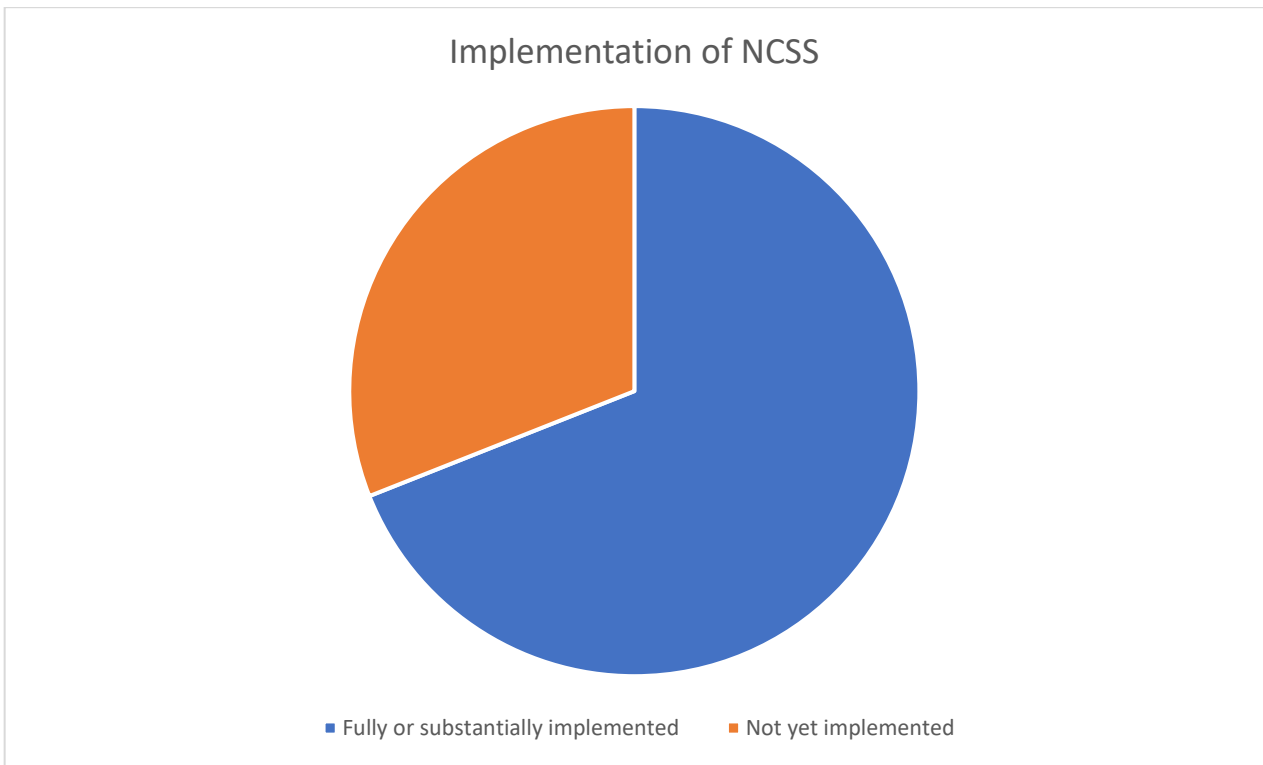
ACSL assessment of the implementation of NCSS indicators by a Church Authority has been determined using a four-point maturity scale<sup>1</sup>.

### **Note on scoring the four-point maturity scale:**

- If an indicator is assessed as **'developed and embedded'** or **'developed'**, it means the implementation is **fully or substantially progressed** — so the indicator will be **counted as implemented**.
- If an indicator is assessed as **'developing'** or **'yet to develop'**, it means the implementation is **not substantially progressed**, so the indicator will be **counted as not implemented**.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Appendix A for definitions of the maturity scale used for the Compliance Assessment.



The key findings from the audit are summarised by NCSS capability areas below.

**Capability Area: Leadership, monitoring and improvement (Standards 1 and 9)**



The focus in Standards 1 and 9 is on how the Diocesan leadership influences and implements a positive safeguarding culture across its ministries. Diocesan key personnel are expected to display strong leadership within their ministry activities, including through an accountable and transparent governance structure. The audit assessed safeguarding policies, procedures and processes in different settings to understand how a zero-tolerance approach to abuse is implemented and how all people (children and adults) are provided a safe environment, free from abuse and discrimination.

The audit team can confirm there is a robust safeguarding culture is promoted at the highest levels of the Diocese. There is thus a commitment by the Diocesan leadership to safeguarding in their rhetoric, actions and practices - evidenced through their language, signage, website and policy framework. A safeguarding commitment statement was on display on the Diocese website and in the Xavier Centre. This commitment statement could be improved by including the term “zero tolerance to abuse” and contact details for feedback or complaints. Displaying the commitment statement in all Diocese premises (churches, schools and offices) would also serve as a reminder to the community of the continuing commitment to safeguarding.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy is a comprehensive combined Code of Conduct and Policy. This is provided to all personnel in the Office of Bishop and across parishes. There is space for a signature to confirm receipt and agreement, which ACSL recommends is collected locally at parishes and recorded at the Diocesan level.

The Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding (OPSS) prefer encouragement over mandating safeguarding policies and procedures (excluding legislative requirements), with the goal of a future embedded safeguarding culture through incremental change. ACSL acknowledges that achieving this goal

requires balance which affects how the NCSS Indicators will be assessed. Consequently, the number of NCSS Indicators in the most mature category increases as safeguarding culture, leadership and governance becomes more embedded. Parish personnel reported positive relationships with OPSS, and acknowledged their strong support and assistance as needed.

Within most Diocese of Wollongong parishes, the safeguarding co-ordinator role is shared between the priest and the parish secretary and is not independent of either. Local safeguarding leadership is provided by the priest with the administrative support by the parish secretaries, increasing the responsibilities of both parties and often limiting safeguarding practice to being reactive rather than proactive. This also leads to unclear allocation of safeguarding duties and community members are unsure who to contact with concerns. Evidence from the Diocese also suggests that safeguarding practice within parishes is stronger where safeguarding discussions are held within parish leadership groups. Fieldwork indicates that parish leadership groups (pastoral councils, parish councils, senior leader groups) are uncommon within the Diocese, and do not meet regularly.

The audit found that more work needs to be done to support parish personnel build their awareness of, and adoption of, safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure a more consistent and embedded practice. One example of this is the inconsistency found in signing of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy by all personnel. A second example is parish risk assessments, which are not universally created or administered. Risk assessments are a strong safeguarding measure and therefore it is recommended that OPSS training focussing on the value and necessity of risk assessments, particularly for parish activities involving children and adults at risk.

In comparison, the Diocesan risk documents are best practice and comprehensive, including acknowledgement that the heart of the Diocese's mission is to be the Bearers of Christ's love. This is reflected in the risk document suite stating the Diocese has "zero tolerance for harm to people or the environment".

OPSS has positive ideas for improving the reach of safeguarding throughout the Diocese in 2026. These include safeguarding newsletters and quarterly meetings with parish safeguarding representatives. Key to these would be the creation of an entity safeguarding implementation plan – with parish safeguarding assessments and regular scheduled OPSS safeguarding visits to parishes for training and support contributing to the plan.



#### **Capability Area: Engaging with children, adults, families and communities (Standards 2, 3 and 4)**

The Diocese of Wollongong aims to ensure families, carers and communities are engaged with its safeguarding approach. The auditors were able to sight materials in parishes that stipulated the presence of parents and carers in sacramental preparation. In parishes offering children's liturgy, this is arranged and led by at least two local teachers.

The documentation provided by the Diocese of Wollongong for their desktop assessment recognises that every person has the right to be protected from harm, to be listened to, to be taken seriously, and to have a say in matters that affect them. There are valuable resources for children on the Diocesan website for access by parishes. ACSL recommends that parishes frequently access, display and refer to these resources.

The Magnolia Tree Project, adopted by some parishes within the Diocese is a good example of engaging those who have experienced abuse to provide their views on survivor engagement projects. Other best

practice Diocesan projects engaging their community include a consultation group working on the Sacrament of Initiation; a Diocesan Committee for Older People; projects working with CatholicCare to raise awareness of the rights and well-being of older Australians; and employment of a clergy care nurse. However, additional resources are needed to allow parishes to understand the concept of how the needs of “adults at risk” are considered to support and engage them within the parish.

Parishes are commended for their acknowledgement and celebration of culturally diverse groups, including the celebration of Safeguarding Sunday, patron saints and the design of inclusive spaces for people with small children.

#### Capability Area: Right people, right role, right knowledge (Standards 5 and 7)



Personnel who are engaged in ministry are critical to the success of implementing safeguarding. In meeting this capability area, the Diocese strives to recruit appropriately skilled people to the right role to implement their ministry.

The audit assessment of Standard 5 revealed that Diocesan employment practices require a stronger safeguarding lens. Safeguarding is not included in advertisements or referred to within most parish employee interviews. Instead, this information is provided upon employment or engagement as a volunteer, through the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy. There are plans to include a safeguarding statement in all Diocesan recruitment advertisements soon.

Professional supervision for clergy is available and yet to be accessed or valued by all clergy. To improve safeguarding practice, annual reviews of parish personnel and volunteers should occur regularly and include a focus on their safeguarding responsibilities and skills.

The current safeguarding training program addresses the nature and indicators of abuse, and action to be taken. This training has been rolled out to clergy and leaders within the Diocese. The Diocese encourages the clergy to filter this information to their parish personnel. The fieldwork finds that within parishes there is inconsistent and often informal handover training and documentation, safeguarding induction training and refresher training is not offered. This has led to gaps in safeguarding knowledge by parish personnel and volunteers.

OPSS has plans for quarterly newsletters and secretaries’ meetings which will provide additional training and resources to safeguarding personnel, assisting with this gap. To address duty of care requirements, and improve personnel well-being, mental health support programs should also be made available for all involved in safeguarding roles.

#### Capability Area: Systems, Policies and Procedures (Standards 6, 8 and 10)



During the audit process, ACSL focuses on the system for managing complaints and does not investigate any individual complaint. The Diocesan processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive. Local parish complaint handling policies and procedures are mostly undocumented and vary between parishes. Instead, parish personnel know to contact OPSS as their first response and appreciate the responsiveness of the OPSS.

The OPSS has plans to create a Diocesan complaint web portal and is in discussions with providers of whistleblower hotlines. In addition, placing the complaints policy and procedures on the Diocesan website and increasing the community's awareness of the processes, will improve complaint handling accessibility and transparency.

For Standard 8, the audit focused on strategies implemented to minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur in both physical and online environments. Within parishes, risk management strategies are not consistently engaged or adopted.

The Diocese has invested in information technology and access within the online environment is monitored, and all personnel should use a Diocese domain name address to access systems and when representing the Diocese. However, there are parish personnel not adopting the Diocesan policies and procedures around email access. All parishes visited are adhering to best practice in the use of social media and CCTV.

Within parishes, there is no consistent third party or contractor hire agreement. ACSL would recommend OPSS create a template for parish use and ensure it includes safeguarding information. ACSL commends the Office of the Bishop for reviewing existing Memorandum of Understanding with other religious orders within the Diocese and including safeguarding clauses.

Standard 10 assesses how the Diocese of Wollongong's safeguarding policies and procedures are well documented, managed and implemented. The desktop review and the fieldwork indicate a dissonance between Office of the Bishop safeguarding policies and procedures and parish implementation of safeguarding.

OPSS creates an annual strategic plan, the focus of which is largely reactive. With the upcoming employment of additional staff, OPSS plans to become more proactive. ACSL recommends that OPSS commence an annual safeguarding self-assessment program for parishes to assist in the identification and resolution of priority safeguarding initiatives. These self-assessments can contribute to the OPSS Safeguarding Implementation Plan discussed under Standard 9.

## Table 1: Summary of NCSS Assessment

Table 1 shows the overall assessment for each of the Standards.

National Catholic Safeguarding Standard	# NCSS indicators	Not Relevant	Assessment of Implementation			
			Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1: Committed leadership, governance & culture	17	1	4	6	6	
2: Children and adults are safe, informed and participate	6		1	3	2	
3: Partnering with families, carers and communities	6		1	2	3	
4: Equity is promoted, and diversity is respected	4		3	0	0	1
5: Robust human resource management	22	3	12	2	3	2
6: Effective complaints management	19		15	1	1	2
7: Ongoing training & education	11		2	5	3	1
8: Safe physical and online environments	7		3	1	3	
9: Continuous improvement	6	1	3	0	2	
10: Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults	6		2	2	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>99</b>		<b>69%</b>		<b>31%</b>	

### 3. Summary of recommendations

- There are no Priority 1 (high rated) audit recommendations for the Diocese of Wollongong.
- There are 10 Priority 2 (medium rated) recommendations.
- There are no Priority 3 (low rated) recommendations.

No.	Indicator(s)	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	1.1.1	Improve visibility and accessibility of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.
	1.1.2	Modify the Safeguarding Commitment Statement to include the term “zero tolerance to abuse” and ensure the Statement is placed in prominent locations in every Diocese location and high visibility on the Diocesan website.
	1.2.1 and 1.2.2	Continue with existing plans, dedicating additional time and attention.
	1.2.3	Assign the safeguarding co-ordinator role to person(s) within each parish/region to ensure the duties and responsibilities are allocated and clear.
	1.2.4	With additional training per recommendation #7 and continued discussions, encourage parish personnel to recognise the importance and value of safeguarding.
	1.3.1	Ensure safeguarding governance arrangements are accessible and publicised in parishes and on the Diocesan website.
	1.4.1	Collect all personnel signatures of confirmation of receipt and reading of The Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.
	1.4.2	Create alternate versions of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy – including an accessible version, a simple summary and translations into community languages as needed.
	1.4.4	Outline the importance of power imbalances in the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.
	1.6.1 and 1.6.2	Create and distribute an information sharing and record keeping policy, ensuring it reflects current practices for record keeping.
Recommendation 2	2.1.1	Distribute resources and encourage use across the parishes.
	2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3.1 and 2.4.1	Create resources communicating the rights of children and adults at risk, safe and respectful peer relationships and abuse prevention programs to be provided at parishes.
	3.2.1, 3.3.1 and 3.3.2	At parishes, encourage families, carers and communities to contribute to discussions about safeguarding approaches.
Recommendation 3	3.2.2	Ensure safeguarding information is very visible within parish sites and on parish newsletters, including contact details for a safeguarding contact.
	3.4.1	Encourage all parishes to promote and/or participate in activities which raise awareness of abuse prevention and the rights and dignity of children and adults at risk.
	4.2.1	Continue with the plan to create a complaints portal on the Diocesan website. Increase accessibility to Complaints Handling Policy and Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy on website and within parish environments.
Recommendation 4		

No.	Indicator(s)	Recommendation
Recommendation 5	5.1.1	Include safeguarding information explicitly in recruitment advertising. Include the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy in employment contract, prior to engagement and require signature to confirm adherence.
	5.1.2	Ensure parish recruitment processes are documented.
	5.1.3	Continue with creation and distribution of draft position descriptions for each common role within parishes.
	5.3.1	Provide consistent and regular safeguarding training to personnel and volunteers in parishes.
	5.3.2	Diocese leadership team undertake the ACSL National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders program.
	5.4.1	Include safeguarding responsibilities within regular mentoring and annual reviews for all personnel across the Diocese (including parishes).
	5.5.4	Continue to encourage all clergy to have regular pastoral/professional supervision.
Recommendation 6	6.1.3, 6.1.4	Refine Complaint Handling Policy to include conflict of interests are handled and acknowledge power imbalances.
	6.1.6	Update Complaint Handling Policy length of retention of records to reflect current OPSS practice.
	6.2.1	Ensure the Complaints Handling Policy is available and publicly accessible; and demonstrates how the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk are prioritised.
Recommendation 7	7.1.1, 7.1.4, 7.3.1, 7.4.1 to 7.4.3 and 7.5.1 to 7.5.2	Regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures needs to be provided to all persons with safeguarding responsibilities.
	7.1.3	Maintain records of all safeguarding training (per recommendation above) that is provided at the parish level.
Recommendation 8	8.1.1 & 8.1.3	Ensure Parish Risk management processes are regularly adopted. Ensure attention is paid to refining some of the confessionals or creating additional alternate risk controls.
	8.2.1	Ensure greater vigilance and additional efforts to embed this indicator across parishes.
	8.4.1	Create and distribute a Diocesan wide third party hire agreement that includes safeguarding information.
Recommendation 9	9.1.1	Extend the annual OPSS team plans to create a proactive Safeguarding Implementation Plan, which subsequently needs to be monitored and reviewed.
	9.1.2	Regularly schedule formal annual local self-assessment checks.
Recommendation 10	10.2.1	Policies and procedures would benefit from greater availability and accessibility across parishes and the community.

No.	Indicator(s)	Recommendation
	10.3.1	Implement a regime of regular parish visits by the OPSS focused on self-assessment against the NCSS to monitor how safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.
	10.3.2 & 10.5.1	Create a formal process for widespread regular feedback on policies and procedures, feedback to be obtained upon reflection of the implementation of such.

Audit recommendations are classified according to priority and urgency for remediation<sup>2</sup>.

Detailed recommendations can be found in Section 5 of this report. Each recommendation also contains the response of the Diocese of Wollongong to the audit finding, including management actions.

We would like to thank the leadership team of the Diocese of Wollongong and all personnel who were involved in the audit for their cooperation and assistance.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer Appendix B for definitions of the Priority ratings used for audit recommendations.

## 4. Assessment of compliance with NCSS indicators

Standard 1		Committed leadership, governance and culture			
<i>The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture</i>					
Criterion 1.1 – There is a public commitment to safeguarding that takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.1.1	The Safeguarding Policy is approved and endorsed by the Church Authority and/or relevant leadership body and is publicly available.		✓		
1.1.2	The Safeguarding Commitment Statement is published, widely displayed, and made publicly available.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b> 1.1.1 To reduce the number of policies and procedures, the Safeguarding Policy has been combined with the Code of Conduct which can be found on the Diocesan website under Resources and Downloads. 1.1.2 A new Diocese Safeguarding Commitment Statement is displayed on the Diocesan website and in the Xavier Centre. This statement does not include the specific terms “zero tolerance to abuse”. Refer to Recommendation #1.					
Criterion 1.2 - A culture of safeguarding children and adults is championed and modelled at all levels of the Church Authority from the top down and bottom up.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.2.1	A strong safeguarding culture is created and maintained by the Church Authority and leaders by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone.</li> <li>• emphasising that safeguarding children and adults is everyone’s responsibility; and</li> <li>• actively monitoring safeguarding compliance and risk management.</li> </ul>		✓		
1.2.2	A Safeguarding Committee is appointed at the highest level of leadership to oversee the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies, and procedures.		✓		
1.2.3	A Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) is appointed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.		✓		
1.2.4	Personnel understand that good safeguarding practices are everyone’s responsibility and are empowered to contribute to the organisation’s safeguarding practices.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b> 1.2.1 OPSS is creating a strong safeguarding culture, additional time and attention is needed to consistently permeate to at all levels. 1.2.2. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is being re-created as an expert panel, replacing a representational committee. Regular monthly meetings of OPSS and Office of Bishop leaders currently discuss safeguarding matters.					

1.2.3 A safeguarding co-ordinator is appointed at the Diocesan level; this role is not designated within parishes where it is usually shared between the parish priest and the secretary.

1.2.4 Within parishes, safeguarding is seen as valuable, “common sense” rather than requiring attention to create good practice.

Refer to Recommendation #1.

Criterion 1.3 - Governance arrangements facilitate the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy across the entity's activities.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.3.1	Governance arrangements are transparent and include safeguarding roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.		✓		
1.3.2	Where the Church Authority's governance includes countries other than Australia, the NCSS are applied wherever possible, taking into account cultural differences and local jurisdictional issues.	Not relevant to current activities			

**Observations:**

1.3.1 Knowledge of governance arrangements across the entity's activities requires additional transparency at the community level. Refer to Recommendation #1.

Criterion 1.4 – The entity's Code of Conduct sets clear behavioural standards towards children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.4.1	The Code of Conduct is explicit and inclusive of all personnel and provides guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour.		✓		
1.4.2	The Code of Conduct is written in accessible language and communicated to personnel, children, families, and carers.			✓	
1.4.3	The Code of Conduct considers the needs of all children and adults at risk, paying particular attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Nations people.</li> <li>• individuals who are elderly, are living with disability, are suffering from an illness, or who are considered to be at risk of abuse';</li> <li>• individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.</li> <li>• children in out of home care, or are homeless; and,</li> <li>• children and adults of diverse sexuality.</li> </ul>	✓			
1.4.4	The Code of Conduct outlines the importance of considering how power imbalances can occur in ministries and services.			✓	

**Observations:**

1.4.1 Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy are one document which is provided to all personnel, an agreement register was not collected in the parishes visited.

1.4.2 Code of Conduct - accessible language versions are not currently available; Code of conduct is provided to personnel including clergy, employees and volunteers.

1.4.4 Code of Conduct is comprehensive but does not explicitly outline the importance of power imbalances. This is partially addressed through expectations of professional boundaries.

Refer Recommendation #1.

Criterion 1.5 - The entity's risk management plan focuses on preventing, identifying, and mitigating safeguarding risks to children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.5.1	The Risk Management Plan considers the needs of children and adults with diminished capacity, and how and when adults at risk make informed choices (dignity of risk).	✓			
1.5.2	The Risk Management Plan incorporates procedures to assess, evaluate, review, and oversee safeguarding of children and adults at risk within its ministry and/or service.	✓			
1.5.3	There is a documented program to regularly identify, monitor, report, and review risks.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 1.6 - Personnel understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping for safeguarding and professional standards.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
1.6.1	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures are documented and communicated to personnel.			✓	
1.6.2	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures align with best practice.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b> 1.6.1 Information sharing and record keeping policies are documented in the Code of Conduct. 1.6.2 Record keeping policy needs refinement to reflect best practice. Refer to Recommendation #1					

Standard 2		Children and adults are safe, informed and participate			
<i>Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</i>					
Criterion 2.1 – Children and adults at risk engaged in an entity's ministry and/or services are informed about their rights, including safety, decision making, participation and how a complaint will be managed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.1.1	Age-appropriate strategies are used to engaged children, seek their views about what makes them feel safe, and enable them to participate in decisions that affect them.		✓		
2.1.2	Adults at risk (or carers where appropriate) are engaged to provide their views about decisions which affect them, what makes them feel safe and to contribute to safeguarding approaches.	✓			
2.1.3	The organisation makes children and adults at risk aware of their rights, including their right to be safe from abuse, and who to contact if they are concerned about their safety or the safety of others.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b> 2.1.1 Strong resources provided by Office of Professional Standards. Resource use is not widespread across the parishes.					

2.1.2 Survivors of abuse have been actively consulted for their views and subsequently engaged in the creation of the Magnolia Tree Project. More broadly, adults at risk are not engaged per the criterion.				
2.1.3 In almost all parishes, the rights of children and adults at risk are currently not communicated to them directly. Refer to Recommendation #2.				
<b>Criterion 2.2 - The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and less isolated.</b>				
	Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.2.1	Children are provided with age-appropriate information about safe and respectful peer relationships.		✓	
<b>Observations:</b>				
2.2.1 Parishes have designed children’s activities to include their parents and carers, this information is provided infrequently and informally in most parishes. Refer to Recommendation #2.				
<b>Criterion 2.3 - The importance of friendships and social connections for adults at risk is recognised and encouraged, helping them feel safe and less isolated.</b>				
	Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.3.1	Adults at risk (or their carers where appropriate), are provided with information about safe and respectful relationships.		✓	
<b>Observations:</b>				
2.3.1 In most parishes, adults at risk is not an understood concept. Refer to Recommendation #2.				
<b>Criterion 2.4 – Where relevant to the setting or context, children and families are offered access to abuse prevention programs and related information that is age appropriate.</b>				
	Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
2.4.1	Children and families are provided with information, access and/or referral to abuse prevention programs, appropriate to the child’s age, development, ability, and level of understanding.		✓	
<b>Observations:</b>				
2.4.1 The information related to this criterion is contained on the Diocesan website. Refer to Recommendation #2.				

<b>Standard 3</b>		<b>Partnering with families, carers and communities</b>			
<b><i>Families, carers and communities are informed and involved in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults.</i></b>					
<b>Criterion 3.1 – Parents, carers and/or guardians participate in decisions affecting their child, or adults with diminished capacity.</b>		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.1.1	The entity encourages parents, carers and/or guardians to take an active role in monitoring the safety of those engaged in the ministry and/or service.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Criterion 3.2 – Families, carers and communities are engaged with and are provided information about the Church Authority’s approach to safeguarding.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.2.1	Families, carers and communities are encouraged to contribute to discussions about safeguarding approaches.		✓		
3.2.2	Safeguarding information is provided and widely available, including contact details of the Safeguarding Committee and/or Safeguarding Co-ordinators.			✓	

**Observations:**

3.2.1 At the Diocesan level, families, carers and communities are encouraged to contribute. However, safeguarding is not commonly discussed within parishes other than within leadership groups/meetings.

3.2.2 Safeguarding information is available on the Diocesan website and provided to parish priests and officers, however is not generally distributed within parishes. Safeguarding co-ordinators are not appointed at the parish level, with most parish secretaries attending to the role jointly with the parish priest.

Refer to Recommendation #3.

Criterion 3.3 - Families, carers and communities are informed about the Church Authority’s operations and governance; and have an opportunity to have a say in the safeguarding policies and practices.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.3.1	Processes are in place to engage families, carers and communities about their views on safeguarding policies and practices.			✓	
3.3.2	Families, carers and communities are aware of the roles and responsibilities of personnel providing ministries and/or services directly to children and adults at risk.			✓	

**Observations:**

3.3.1 & 3.3.2 Safeguarding discussions in parishes are generally limited to leadership groups and their meetings. Refer to Recommendation #3.

Criterion 3.4 – The entity raises community awareness of the dignity and rights of all children and adults		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
3.4.1	The entity promotes and/or participates in activities which raise awareness of abuse prevention and the rights and dignity of children and adults at risk.		✓		

**Observations:**

3.4.1 There are significant Diocesan projects to raise community awareness and OPSS provides resources for the activities and the promotion of awareness of abuse prevention. The use of these resources is not widespread across the parishes beyond Safeguarding Sunday which focuses on children. Refer to Recommendation #3.

Standard 4		Equity is promoted and diversity is respected			
<i>Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice</i>					
Criterion 4.1 - The diverse circumstances and backgrounds of children and adults at risk are acknowledged and accommodated by providing appropriate support.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop

4.1.1	The Safeguarding Policy and procedures demonstrate an understanding, and awareness of the diverse circumstances and experiences that increase the risk of abuse.	✓			
4.1.2	The Complaints Handling Policy and practices address barriers that may prevent a disclosure of abuse being made and that hinders personnel from recognising and responding appropriately.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
Criterion 4.2 – Children and adults have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that promote inclusion, are culturally safe, and accessible.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
4.2.1	Information about company processes and supports are provided in culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand formats.				✓
<b>Observations:</b>					
4.2.1 Parish priests and secretaries refer all safeguarding complaints to OPSS. Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy can be found on the Diocesan website. To improve access, there is a plan to create a complaints portal on the Diocesan website. Refer to Recommendation #4.					
Criterion 4.3 - The diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those living with disability, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children and adults who are unable to live at home, and those of diverse sexuality, are acknowledged.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
4.3.1	The Safeguarding Policy and procedures empower children and adults by reflecting attitudes and behaviours that respect their inherent dignity, are inclusive and are responsive to diverse needs.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Standard 5</b>		<b>Robust human resource management</b>			
<i>People working with children and adults at risk are suitable and supported to reflect safeguarding values in practice</i>					
Criterion 5.1 – A strong commitment to safeguarding underpins an entity’s recruitment.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.1.1	The commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance approach to abuse are explicit in advertising, screening, and recruitment for personnel.				✓
5.1.2	Recruitment and screening procedures and processes are fully documented.		✓		

5.1.3	Positions are assessed for the expected level of contact with children/adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
5.1.1 Safeguarding is a component of the screening and recruitment of personnel; however this is not included in advertising and should be more explicit. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy is provided as part of the induction process for new staff.					
5.1.2 Screening check results are documented at the local and Diocesan level. Recruitment processes are not always fully documented in parishes.					
5.1.3 Guidance is provided to parishes in relation to common volunteer roles and their expected level of contact with children and adults at risk. Draft position description for each common role have been created and will be adopted in 2026.					
Refer to Recommendation #5.					
Criterion 5.2 – Personnel have current clearances (for example, working with children checks) and/or equivalent background checks relevant to their role.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.2.1	All personnel are required to have a background check or clearance (as relevant to their role).	✓			
5.2.2	As required by legislation, personnel must have a current working with children check (or working with vulnerable people check) and/or NDIS Worker Screening Check prior to working with children and adults at risk.	✓			
5.2.3	Records of all checks are maintained and monitored in accordance with legislation, for all personnel	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvements are noted.					
Criterion 5.3 - Personnel complete appropriate induction and are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities including reporting obligations.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.3.1	All personnel participate in a safeguarding induction program, which occurs as soon as possible after commencement.				✓
5.3.2	All Church Authorities and their leadership team undertake the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
5.3.1 Safeguarding induction is provided to clergy; however this training is informal (and irregular) at the parish level to personnel and volunteers.					
5.3.2 Diocese leadership team undertake their own safeguarding training and have not undertaken the ACSL National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders program.					
Refer recommendation #5					
Criterion 5.4 - Ongoing supervision and people management includes an emphasis on safeguarding responsibilities.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop

5.4.1	Professional supervision, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
5.4.1 Professional supervision takes place for senior roles where appropriate and within the Office of the Bishop, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel does take place through growth and development plans. However, there is no specific focus on safeguarding responsibilities. Refer recommendation #5.					
Criterion 5.5 – Before and during seminary and religious formation, candidates are appropriately screened and supported, including processes for ongoing formation, support and supervision of clergy and religious.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.5.1	The Church Authority seeks professional support in screening candidates for seminary/formation programs and before ordination/profession of vows. This includes a responsibility to enquire if an applicant or candidate has previously withdrawn or been exited from another seminary or formation program.	✓			
5.5.2	Seminary and initial formation programs have robust screening processes for candidates for religious ministry, including external psychological and psychosexual assessments.	✓			
5.5.3	Ongoing integrated formation for clergy and religious addresses both the canonical and civil safeguarding requirements. For priests, this would include supporting their fidelity to the Church’s teaching regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the inviolability of the Sacramental Seal.	✓			
5.5.4	All clergy and religious in full-time ministry participate in at least 6 hours, with the optimum being 10 hours of professional/pastoral supervision each year. Clergy and religious not in full-time ministry participate in 6 hours of reflective practice activities each year.		✓		
5.5.5	All clergy and religious in ministry, undertake ongoing professional development and regular appraisals	✓			
5.5.6	All newly ordained clergy and newly professed religious are supported with a suitable mentor for at least five years post ordination or final profession.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
5.5.4 All clergy are strongly encouraged to have regular pastoral/professional supervision. They have received formation about the benefits of professional/pastoral supervision at clergy in-services. However not all clergy are meeting this requirement. Refer Recommendation #5.					
Criterion 5.6 - The curriculum for seminary and formation programs for clergy and religious includes safeguarding knowledge and skills development of candidates to understand and lead initiatives for safeguarding children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop

5.6.1	Seminary and initial formation programs build candidates' knowledge and skills in a range of areas to support safeguarding children and adults.	Not applicable
5.6.2	Seminary and initial formation programs include developing pastoral responses to victims and survivors of abuse.	Not applicable
5.6.3	Seminary and initial formation programs identify how to avoid abuse of power and the development and/or reinforcement of clericalist attitudes and behaviours.	Not applicable

**Observations:**

N/A.

Criterion 5.7 – The movement and credentialing of those in active ministry is appropriately managed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.7.1	A system to assess the safeguarding credentials and manage the movement of all seminarians, clergy, religious and lay ministries between different seminaries, formation programs and other Church entities is in place.	✓			

**Observations:**

Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations for improvements are noted.

Criterion 5.8 – Where clergy and religious from countries other than Australia are recruited to ministry, programs are in place to support their cultural awareness, screening, induction, professional supervision and development.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.8.1	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia recruited to ministry, are screened and verification information is sought from the international Church Authority.	✓			
5.8.2	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia participate in a safeguarding induction program which is documented and occurs as soon as possible after commencement of ministry.	✓			
5.8.3	Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia are supported with a suitable mentor for at least the first two years of their time in Australia.	✓			

**Observations:**

Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.

Standard 6		Effective complaints management			
<i>Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities and personnel.</i>					
Criterion 6.1 - The entity's Complaints Handling Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities, approaches to dealing with different types of complaints, reporting obligations and record keeping requirements.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.1.1	Policies and procedures address mandatory	✓			

	reporting obligations.				
6.1.2	There are clear procedures that provide step-by-step responses and action to be taken for different types of complaints, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>breaches of Code of Conduct.</li> <li>disclosures, allegations, or concerns of current abuse of a child.</li> <li>an adult bringing forward a complaint of abuse suffered as a child; and</li> <li>an adult bringing forward a complaint of current or past abuse experienced as an adult.</li> </ul>	✓			
6.1.3	The Complaint Handling Policy outlines how perceived or actual conflict of interests are managed.				✓
6.1.4	The Complaint Handling Policy acknowledges that power imbalances exist between the complainant and respondent and has strategies in place to address this.				✓
6.1.5	The Complaint Handling Policy spells out who has responsibilities in relation to handling complaints and when procedures are enacted.	✓			
6.1.6	All abuse complaints, incidents, allegations, disclosures, concerns and referral are recorded, and confidential information is stored, protected and retained according to the Privacy Act, and for 50 years.		✓		
<b>Observations:</b>					
6.1.3 Complaint Handling Policy does not outline how conflict of interests are handled. This is referred to in the Clergy Complaint Resolution guidelines.					
6.1.4 Complaint Handling Policy does not acknowledge power imbalances. This is included in the Clergy Complaint Resolution guidelines.					
6.1.6 Complaint Handling Policy requires length of retention of records to be updated, to reflect current OPSS practice.					
Refer to Recommendation #6.					
Criterion 6.2 - The Complaint Handling Policy is understood by children, adults, families, carers, and personnel, and focuses on the rights of children and adults at risk.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.2.1	The Complaint Handling Policy and procedures demonstrate how the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk are prioritised.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
6.2.1 Complaints Handling Policy is an internal document; limited complaints handling information is included in the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy. Neither document addresses this point specifically. Refer to Recommendation #6.					
Criterion 6.3 - Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop

6.3.1	The Complaints Handling Policy is aligned, and operates in conjunction, with the Code of Conduct, HR and other policies.	✓			
6.3.2	The Complaints Handling Policy commits to an initial risk assessment if a complaint of abuse is received, to identify and minimise any risk to children or adults. Ongoing risk assessments are conducted throughout investigation processes.	✓			
6.3.3	Complainants are responded to promptly and kept informed as to the progress of dealing with their complaint.	✓			
6.3.4	Trauma-informed and victim-centred support and care is offered to any child or adult who has experienced abuse.	✓			
6.3.5	Sharing information relating to complaints adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles and relevant legislation.	✓			
6.3.6	The Complaints Handling Policy and procedures empower and support personnel to raise, in good faith, concerns and allegations about unacceptable behaviour towards children and adults by other personnel.	✓			
6.3.7	Where a complaint related to the sexual abuse of a child or adult against clergy or religious is substantiated under a civil standard, the Church Authority undertakes a risk management process to determine the appropriate action, in keeping with Church protocols.	✓			
6.3.8	Where a clergy or religious is convicted of a canonical offence relating to child sexual abuse, the respondent is to be prohibited from the exercise of ministry until such times as the process for imposing a penalty is completed by the relevant dicastery.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 6.4 - The Complaints Handling Policy includes the process of reporting complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, requiring cooperation with any statutory or contractual processes.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.4.1	The Complaints Handling Policy requires that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concerns and complaints of child abuse occurring within the entity be reported to the appropriate statutory authorities, in accordance with regulations.</li> <li>any concerns and/or complaints of a criminal against adults be reported to statutory authorities; and</li> <li>personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.</li> </ul>	✓			

<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 6.5 – The Church Authority ensures mechanisms are in place to support complainants of child and adult sexual abuse.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.5.1	Appropriate pastoral care is provided to complainants.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 6.6 - The Church Authority ensures respondents facing allegations are supported and monitored.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
6.6.1	Appropriately trained personnel engaged in consultation with the respondents to counsel and represent the pastoral needs of the respondent.	✓			
6.6.2	Arrangements are in place to monitor, supervise and support a respondent, where there is a complaint, until (and if) the Church Authority no longer has this responsibility.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					

<b>Standard 7</b>		<b>Ongoing education and training</b>			
<i>Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and adults safe through information, ongoing education and training.</i>					
Criterion 7.1 - Personnel are trained and supported to implement the safeguarding policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.1.1	Personnel are provided regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures.			✓	
7.1.2	The entity's induction and refresher Safeguarding of Children and Adults training must as a minimum cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• safeguarding risk management.</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy and procedures.</li> <li>• Complaints Handling Policy and procedures.</li> <li>• reporting obligations; and</li> <li>• e-safety training.</li> </ul>	✓			
7.1.3	Records are maintained to ensure all personnel attend induction training and participate in refresher safeguarding training at least every three years.				✓

7.1.4	All personnel with specific safeguarding responsibilities receive ongoing support and professional development to their role.		✓		
<b>Observations:</b>					
7.1.1 Clergy are provided with regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures. 7.1.3 Records are maintained for clergy training. 7.1.4 Support is provided to individuals upon request. Refer to Recommendation #7.					
Criterion 7.2 - Personnel are supported to recognise the nature and indicators of child abuse, including harmful behaviours by a child towards another child.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.2.1	Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place children at risk of abuse, building knowledge to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the nature and impact of child abuse.</li> <li>• understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse.</li> <li>• identify risk factors, such as grooming behaviours; and</li> <li>• understand, identify, and respond to abusive behaviours by a child towards another child.</li> </ul>	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted					
Criterion 7.3 – Personnel are supported to recognise the factors that contribute to adult abuse, with a focus on adults at risk.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.3.1	Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse, building knowledge to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the nature and impact of adult abuse.</li> <li>• understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse.</li> <li>• identify risk factors, such as abuse of power, and exploitation.</li> <li>• recognise how adults and institutions can be groomed, including power imbalances can be exploited; and</li> <li>• understand what could make specific adults at increased risk of abuse.</li> </ul>			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
7.3.1 Personnel struggle to recognise the factors contributing to adult abuse. Refer to Recommendation #7.					
Criterion 7.4 - Personnel have the information and skills to respond effectively to safeguarding risks, concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.4.1	Education and training programs equip relevant personnel to appropriately respond to and support		✓		

	anyone bringing forward concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.				
7.4.2	Personnel receive training on information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures.		✓		
7.4.3	Personnel receive training on reporting obligations under Commonwealth/State/Territory legislative and canon law, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reporting suspected criminal behaviour to police.</li> <li>mandatory reporting to child protection authorities.</li> <li>Reportable Conduct Scheme.</li> <li>reporting to other regulatory authorities or government departments; and</li> <li>Canonical reporting requirements.</li> </ul>		✓		

**Observations:**

7.4.1 to 7.4.3 Training is regularly provided to clergy; training and support for parish personnel is provided on request. Refer to Recommendation #7.

Criterion 7.5 - Personnel receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and adults.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
7.5.1	Cultural safety training is provided to equip personnel to create, culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.		✓		
7.5.2	Training is provided to relevant personnel to equip them with the knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and how to create safe environments for people from these groups.			✓	

**Observations:**

7.5.1-7.5.2 Training is regularly provided to clergy; training and support for parish personnel is provided on request. Refer to Recommendation #7.

Standard 8		Safe physical and online environments			
<i>Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.</i>					
Criterion 8.1 – The Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy addresses both physical and online risks, without compromising the individual’s right to privacy or wellbeing.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.1.1	Both physical and online risks are addressed within the provision of ministry and/or services including risks arising from:			✓	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child;</li> <li>ministries and/or services such as counselling, home visits, outreach, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction and mentoring;</li> <li>potential physical contact between the penitent and the confessor where the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated;</li> <li>one-to-one interaction with adults at risk;</li> <li>child-to-child interactions.</li> <li>adult-to-child interactions.</li> <li>adult-to-adult interactions (with consideration to power imbalances); and</li> <li>the nature of physical spaces.</li> </ul> <p>Wherever possible, these interactions are conducted in an open or visible space, or within clear line of sight of another adult.</p>				
8.1.2	The entity's policies require the safe use of online applications for children and adults to learn, communicate and seek help.	✓			
8.1.3	Personnel are involved in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks to children and adults.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
8.1.1 & 8.1.3 Parish Risk management processes are not regularly adopted. In addition, attention needs to be paid to refining some of the confessionals or creating additional alternate risk controls. Refer recommendation #8.					
Criterion 8.2 - The online environment is used in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding policy.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.2.1	Personnel access and use online environments in line with the entity's Code of Conduct, Privacy Act and relevant communication protocols.		✓		
8.2.2	The online environment is monitored, and breaches are managed in accordance with disciplinary, or other relevant policies and reported to the leadership.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
8.2.1 This indicator requires greater vigilance and additional efforts to embed across parishes. Refer to Recommendation #8.					
Criterion 8.3 - Risk management plans address the range of settings, activities, and physical environments in which ministry and/or service occur.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.3.1	A process is in place to assess and manage risk if the organisation becomes aware of the presence of someone who poses an unacceptable risk to others within their ministry and/or service.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					

Criterion 8.4 – Where facilities and services are contracted to and from third parties, contractual arrangements specify safeguarding considerations.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
8.4.1	If a third party provides services or uses the organisations facilities appropriate safeguarding policies and practices are in place.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b>					
8.4.1 Parishes develop their own agreements for third parties, and agreements sighted do not include reference to safeguarding policies and practices. Memorandum of Understanding with other Religious Orders within the Diocese are being reviewed to include safeguarding information. Recommendation #8.					

Standard 9		Continuous improvement			
<i>Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.</i>					
Criterion 9.1 - The safeguarding practices for the protection of children and adults at risk are regularly reviewed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.1.1	The Safeguarding Implementation Plan outlines how safeguarding practices are monitored and reviewed, and how this information is reported.			✓	
9.1.2	The Church Authority monitors the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and co-ordinates annual local self-assessment checks.			✓	
9.1.3	The Safeguarding Policy is subject to review at least every three years and outcomes of this review are documented.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b>					
9.1.1 The Diocese relies on annual OPSS team plans to monitor and review safeguarding related practices, a Safeguarding Implementation Plan has yet to be developed.					
9.1.2 Annual local self-assessment checks are not regularly scheduled.					
9.1.3 The policy is subject to review every two years.					
Refer to Recommendation #9.					
Criterion 9.2 – Concerns and complaints are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures in safeguarding practices.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.2.1	All individual incidents or complaints relating to safeguarding practices and/or failures are considered by the leadership to identify systemic patterns and support continuous improvement.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted					
Criterion 9.3 - The Church Authority reports on the findings of its safeguarding reviews.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
9.3.1	The findings of relevant reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices to are reported to stakeholders.	✓			

9.3.2	The findings of audits or reviews undertaken or validated by ACSL are made public.	Not applicable – first audit
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted		

Standard 10		Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults			
<i>Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.</i>					
Criterion 10.1 - Policies and procedures address the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.1.1	All relevant policies and procedures reference appropriate safeguarding approaches, requirements and responsibilities.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 10.2 - Policies and procedures are accessible and easy to understand.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.2.1	The policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding are readily available and accessible to all personnel.			✓	
<b>Observations:</b> 10.2.1 Policies and procedures would benefit from greater availability and accessibility across parishes and the community. Refer to Recommendation #10.					
Criterion 10.3 - Best practice models and stakeholder consultation inform the development and review of policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.3.1	There are processes in place to monitor how safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.				✓
10.3.2	There is a process in place to develop and review safeguarding policies and procedures.		✓		
<b>Observations:</b> 10.3.1 Implementation at the parish level is consultative and optional, which leads to varying levels of implementation. 10.3.2 Consultation with clergy is a strength of OPSS, feedback is obtained on an ad hoc basis. Refer to Recommendation #10.					
Criterion 10.4 - Church leaders champion and model best practice implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.4.1	The Church Authority and leaders promote the NCSS and enact all policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding.	✓			

<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. No recommendations are noted.					
Criterion 10.5 - Personnel understand and implement the policies and procedures.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
10.5.1	Personnel are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and practical implementation of policies and procedures and provide feedback.		✓		
<b>Observations:</b> 10.5.1 Feedback processes are being enhanced and will be implemented in 2026. Refer to Recommendation #10.					

## 5. Detailed findings and Recommendations

Recommendation #1		Priority 2
Indicator No.	Indicator	
1.1.1	The Safeguarding Policy is approved and endorsed by the Church Authority and/or relevant leadership body and is publicly available.	
1.1.2	The Safeguarding Commitment Statement is published, widely displayed, and made publicly available.	
1.2.1	A strong safeguarding culture is created and maintained by the Church Authority and leaders by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting safeguarding, and the dignity and rights of everyone.</li> <li>• emphasising that safeguarding children and adults is everyone’s responsibility; and</li> </ul> actively monitoring safeguarding compliance and risk management.	
1.2.2	A Safeguarding Committee is appointed at the highest level of leadership to oversee the effective ongoing implementation of safeguarding practices, policies, and procedures.	
1.2.3	A Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s) is appointed with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.	
1.2.4	Personnel understand that good safeguarding practices are everyone’s responsibility and are empowered to contribute to the organisation’s safeguarding practices.	
1.3.1	Governance arrangements are transparent and include safeguarding roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.	
1.4.1	The Code of Conduct is explicit and inclusive of all personnel and provides guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour.	
1.4.2	The Code of Conduct is written in accessible language and communicated to personnel, children, families, and carers.	
1.4.4	The Code of Conduct outlines the importance of considering how power imbalances can occur in ministries and services.	
1.6.1	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures are documented and communicated to personnel.	
1.6.2	Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures align with best practice.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>1.1.1 To reduce the number of policies and procedures, the Safeguarding Policy has been combined with the Code of Conduct which can be found on the Diocesan website under Resources and Downloads.</p> <p>1.1.2 A new Diocese Safeguarding Commitment Statement is displayed on the Diocesan website and in the Xavier Centre. This statement does not include the specific terms “zero tolerance to abuse”.</p> <p>1.2.1 OPSS is creating a strong safeguarding culture, additional time and attention is needed to consistently permeate to at all levels.</p>	

	<p>1.2.2. The Diocesan Safeguarding Committee is being re-created as an expert panel, replacing a representational committee. Regular monthly meetings of OPSS and Office of Bishop leaders currently discuss safeguarding matters.</p> <p>1.2.3 A safeguarding co-ordinator is appointed at the Diocesan level; this role is not designated within parishes where it is usually shared between the parish priest and the secretary.</p> <p>1.2.4 Within parishes, safeguarding is seen as valuable, “common sense” rather than requiring attention to create good practice.</p> <p>1.3.1 Knowledge of governance arrangements across the entity’s activities requires additional transparency at the community level.</p> <p>1.4.1 Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy are one document which is provided to all personnel, an agreement register was not collected in the parishes visited.</p> <p>1.4.2 Code of Conduct - accessible language versions are not currently available; Code of conduct is provided to personnel including clergy, employees and volunteers.</p> <p>1.4.4 Code of Conduct is comprehensive but does not outline the importance of power imbalances.</p> <p>1.6.1 Information sharing and record keeping policies are documented in the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>1.6.2 Record keeping policy needs refinement to reflect best practice.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>1.1.1 Improve visibility and accessibility of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.</p> <p>1.1.2 Modify the Safeguarding Commitment Statement to include the term “zero tolerance to abuse” and ensure the Statement is placed in prominent locations in every Diocese location and high visibility on the Diocesan website.</p> <p>1.2.1 &amp; 1.2.2 Continue with existing plans, dedicating additional time and attention.</p> <p>1.2.3 Assign the safeguarding co-ordinator role to person(s) within each parish/region to ensure the duties and responsibilities are allocated and clear.</p> <p>1.2.4 With additional training per recommendation #7 and continued discussions, encourage parish personnel to recognise the importance and value of safeguarding.</p> <p>1.3.1 Ensure safeguarding governance arrangements are accessible and publicised in parishes and on the Diocesan website.</p> <p>1.4.1 Collect all personnel signatures of confirmation of receipt and reading of The Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.</p> <p>1.4.2 Create alternate versions of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy – including an accessible version, a simple summary and translations into community languages as needed.</p> <p>1.4.4 Outline the importance of power imbalances in the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy.</p> <p>1.6.1 &amp; 1.6.2 Create and distribute an information sharing and record keeping policy, ensuring it reflects current practices for record keeping.</p>	
<b>Agreed Actions</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

Recommendation #2		Priority 2
Indicator No.	Indicator	
2.1.1	Age-appropriate strategies are used to engaged children, seek their views about what makes them feel safe, and enable them to participate in decisions that affect them.	
2.1.2	Adults at risk (or carers where appropriate) are engaged to provide their views about decisions which affect them, what makes them feel safe and to contribute to safeguarding approaches.	
2.1.3	The organisation makes children and adults at risk aware of their rights, including their right to be safe from abuse, and who to contact if they are concerned about their safety or the safety of others.	
2.2.1	Children are provided with age-appropriate information about safe and respectful peer relationships.	
2.3.1	Adults at risk (or their carers where appropriate), are provided with information about safe and respectful relationships.	
2.4.1	Children and families are provided with information, access and/or referral to abuse prevention programs, appropriate to the child's age, development, ability, and level of understanding.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>2.1.1 Strong resources provided by Office of Professional Standards. Resource use is not widespread across the parishes.</p> <p>2.1.3 In almost all parishes, the rights of children and adults at risk are currently not communicated to them directly.</p> <p>2.2.1 Parishes have designed children's activities to include their parents and carers, this information is provided infrequently and informally in most parishes</p> <p>2.3.1 In most parishes, adults at risk is not an understood concept.</p> <p>2.4.1 The information related to this criterion is contained on the Diocesan website.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>2.1.1 Distribute resources and encourage use across the parishes.</p> <p>2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.4.1 Create resources communicating the rights of children and adults at risk, safe and respectful peer relationships and abuse prevention programs to be provided at parishes.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

Recommendation #3		Priority 2
Indicator No.	Indicator	
3.2.1	Families, carers and communities are encouraged to contribute to discussions about safeguarding approaches.	
3.2.2	Safeguarding information is provided and widely available, including contact details of the Safeguarding Committee and/or Safeguarding Co-ordinators.	
3.3.1	Processes are in place to engage families, carers and communities about their views on safeguarding policies and practices.	

3.3.2	Families, carers and communities are aware of the roles and responsibilities of personnel providing ministries and/or services directly to children and adults at risk.	
3.4.1	The entity promotes and/or participates in activities which raise awareness of abuse prevention and the rights and dignity of children and adults at risk.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>3.2.1 At the Diocesan level, families, carers and communities are encouraged to contribute. However, safeguarding is not commonly discussed within parishes other than within leadership groups/meetings.</p> <p>3.2.2 Safeguarding information is available on the Diocesan website and provided to parish priests and officers, however is not generally distributed within parishes. Safeguarding co-ordinators are not appointed at the parish level, with most parish secretaries attending to the role jointly with the parish priest.</p> <p>3.3.1 &amp; 3.3.2 Safeguarding discussions in parishes are generally limited to leadership groups and their meetings.</p> <p>3.4.1 There are significant Diocesan projects to raise community awareness and OPSS provides resources for the activities and the promotion of awareness of abuse prevention. The use of these resources is not widespread across the parishes beyond Safeguarding Sunday which focuses on children.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>3.2.1, 3.3.1 &amp; 3.3.2 At parishes, encourage families, carers and communities to contribute to discussions about safeguarding approaches.</p> <p>3.2.2 Ensure safeguarding information is very visible within parish sites and on parish newsletters, including contact details for a safeguarding contact.</p> <p>3.4.1 Encourage all parishes to promote and/or participate in activities which raise awareness of abuse prevention and the rights and dignity of children and adults at risk.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

<b>Recommendation #4</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>Indicator No.</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	
4.2.1	Information about company processes and supports are provided in culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand formats.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	4.2.1 Parish priests and secretaries refer all safeguarding complaints to OPSS. Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy can be found on the Diocesan website. To improve access, there is a plan to create a complaints portal on the Diocesan website.	
<b>Recommendation</b>	4.2.1 Continue with the plan to create a complaints portal on the Diocesan website. Increase accessibility to Complaints Handling Policy and Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy on website and within parish environments.	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

Recommendation #5		Priority 2
Indicator No.	Indicator	
5.1.1	The commitment to safeguarding and a zero-tolerance approach to abuse are explicit in advertising, screening, and recruitment for personnel.	
5.1.2	Recruitment and screening procedures and processes are fully documented.	
5.1.3	Positions are assessed for the expected level of contact with children/adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented.	
5.3.1	All personnel participate in a safeguarding induction program, which occurs as soon as possible after commencement.	
5.3.2	All Church Authorities and their leadership team undertake the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders.	
5.4.1	Professional supervision, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel include a focus on safeguarding responsibilities.	
5.5.4	All clergy and religious in full-time ministry participate in at least 6 hours, with the optimum being 10 hours of professional/pastoral supervision each year. Clergy and religious not in full-time ministry participate in 6 hours of reflective practice activities each year.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>5.1.1 Safeguarding is a component of the screening and recruitment of personnel; however this is not included in advertising and should be more explicit. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy is provided as part of the induction process for new staff.</p> <p>5.1.2 Screening check results are documented at the local and Diocesan level. Recruitment processes are not always fully documented in parishes.</p> <p>5.1.3 Guidance is provided to parishes in relation to common volunteer roles and their expected level of contact with children and adults at risk. Draft position description for each common role have been created and will be adopted in 2026.</p> <p>5.3.1 Safeguarding induction is provided to clergy; however this training is informal (and irregular) at the parish level to personnel and volunteers.</p> <p>5.3.2 Diocese leadership team undertake their own safeguarding training and have not undertaken the ACSL National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders program.</p> <p>5.4.1 Professional supervision takes place for senior roles where appropriate and within the Office of the Bishop, mentoring, and annual performance reviews for personnel does take place through growth and development plans. However, there is no specific focus on safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>5.5.4 All clergy are strongly encouraged to have regular pastoral/professional supervision. They have received formation about the benefits of professional/pastoral supervision at clergy in-services. However not all clergy are meeting this requirement.</p>	

<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>5.1.1 Include safeguarding information explicitly in recruitment advertising. Include the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy in employment contract, prior to engagement and require signature to confirm adherence.</p> <p>5.1.2 Ensure parish recruitment processes are documented.</p> <p>5.1.3 Continue with creation and distribution of draft position descriptions for each common role within parishes.</p> <p>5.3.1 Provide consistent and regular safeguarding training to personnel and volunteers in parishes.</p> <p>5.3.2 Diocese leadership team undertake the ACSL National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Introductory Session for Leaders program.</p> <p>5.4.1 Include safeguarding responsibilities within regular mentoring and annual reviews for all personnel across the Diocese (including parishes).</p> <p>5.5.4 Continue to encourage all clergy to have regular pastoral/professional supervision.</p>
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026

Recommendation #6		<b>Priority 2</b>
Indicator No.	Indicator	
6.1.4	The Complaint Handling Policy acknowledges that power imbalances exist between the complainant and respondent and has strategies in place to address this.	
6.1.6	All abuse complaints, incidents, allegations, disclosures, concerns and referral are recorded, and confidential information is stored, protected and retained according to the Privacy Act, and for 50 years.	
6.2.1	The Complaint Handling Policy and procedures demonstrate how the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk are prioritised.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>6.1.3 Complaint Handling Policy does not outline how conflict of interests are handled. This is referred to in the Clergy Complaint Resolution guidelines.</p> <p>6.1.4 Complaint Handling Policy does not acknowledge power imbalances. This is included in the Clergy Complaint Resolution guidelines.</p> <p>6.1.6 Complaint Handling Policy requires length of retention of records to be updated, to reflect current OPSS practice.</p> <p>6.2.1 Complaints Handling Policy is an internal document; limited complaints handling information is included in the Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy. Neither document addresses this point specifically.</p>	

<b>Recommendation</b>	6.1.3, 6.1.4 Refine Complaint Handling Policy to include conflict of interests are handled and acknowledge power imbalances. 6.1.6 Update Complaint Handling Policy length of retention of records to reflect current OPSS practice. 6.2.1 Ensure the Complaints Handling Policy is available and publicly accessible; and demonstrates how the safety and well-being of children and adults at risk are prioritised.
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026

<b>Recommendation #7</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>Indicator No.</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	
7.1.1	Personnel are provided regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures.	
7.1.3	Records are maintained to ensure all personnel attend induction training and participate in refresher safeguarding training at least every three years.	
7.1.4	All personnel with specific safeguarding responsibilities receive ongoing support and professional development to their role.	
7.3.1	Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse, building knowledge to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand the nature and impact of adult abuse.</li> <li>• understand the nature, factors, and impact of institutional abuse.</li> <li>• identify risk factors, such as abuse of power, and exploitation.</li> <li>• recognise how adults and institutions can be groomed, including power imbalances can be exploited; and</li> </ul> understand what could make specific adults at increased risk of abuse.	
7.4.1	Education and training programs equip relevant personnel to appropriately respond to and support anyone bringing forward concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.	
7.4.2	Personnel receive training on information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures.	
7.4.3	Personnel receive training on reporting obligations under Commonwealth/State/Territory legislative and canon law, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reporting suspected criminal behaviour to police.</li> <li>• mandatory reporting to child protection authorities.</li> <li>• Reportable Conduct Scheme.</li> <li>• reporting to other regulatory authorities or government departments; and</li> </ul> Canonical reporting requirements.	
7.5.1	Cultural safety training is provided to equip personnel to create, culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	

7.5.2	Training is provided to relevant personnel to equip them with the knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds and how to create safe environments for people from these groups.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>7.1.1 Clergy are provided with regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures.</p> <p>7.1.3 Records are maintained for clergy training.</p> <p>7.1.4 Support is provided to individuals upon request.</p> <p>7.3.1 Personnel struggle to recognise the factors contributing to adult abuse.</p> <p>7.4.1 to 7.4.3 Training is regularly provided to clergy; training and support for parish personnel is provided on request.</p> <p>7.5.1-7.5.2 Training is regularly provided to clergy; training and support for parish personnel is provided on request.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>7.1.1, 7.1.4, 7.3.1, 7.4.1 to 7.4.3 and 7.5.1 to 7.5.2 Regular education and training on safeguarding policies and procedures needs to be provided to all persons with safeguarding responsibilities.</p> <p>7.1.3 Maintain records of all safeguarding training (per recommendation above) that is provided at the parish level.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

<b>Recommendation #8</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>Indicator No.</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	
8.1.1	<p>Both physical and online risks are addressed with the provision of ministry and/or services, including risks arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child;</li> <li>• ministries and/or services such as counselling, home visits, outreach, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction, and mentoring;</li> <li>• potential physical contact between the penitent and the Confessor where the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated;</li> <li>• one-to-one interactions with adults at risk;</li> <li>• child-to-child interactions;</li> <li>• adult-to-child interactions;</li> <li>• adult-to-adult interactions (with consideration of power imbalances); and</li> <li>• the nature of physical spaces.</li> </ul> <p>Where possible, these interactions are to be conducted in an open or visible space, or within clear line of sight of another adult.</p>	

8.1.3	Personnel are involved in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks to children and adults.	
8.2.1	Personnel access and use online environments in line with the entity's Code of Conduct, Privacy Act and relevant communication protocols.	
8.4.1	If a third party provides services or uses the organisations facilities appropriate safeguarding policies and practices are in place.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>8.1.1 &amp; 8.1.3 Parish Risk management processes are not regularly adopted. In addition, attention needs to be paid to refining some of the confessionals or creating additional alternate risk controls.</p> <p>8.2.1 This indicator requires greater vigilance and additional efforts to embed across parishes.</p> <p>8.4.1 Parishes develop their own agreements for third parties, and agreements sighted do not include reference to safeguarding policies and practices. Memorandum of Understanding with other Religious Orders within the Diocese are being reviewed to include safeguarding information.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>8.1.1 &amp; 8.1.3 Ensure Parish Risk management processes are regularly adopted. Ensure attention is paid to refining some of the confessionals or creating additional alternate risk controls.</p> <p>8.2.1 Ensure greater vigilance and additional efforts to embed this indicator across parishes.</p> <p>8.4.1 Create and distribute a Diocesan wide third party hire agreement that includes safeguarding information.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

<b>Recommendation #9</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>Indicator No.</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	
9.1.1	The Safeguarding Implementation Plan outlines how safeguarding practices are monitored and reviewed, and how this information is reported.	
9.1.2	The Church Authority monitors the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and co-ordinates annual local self-assessment checks.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>9.1.1 The Diocese relies on annual OPSS team plans to monitor and review safeguarding related practices, a Safeguarding Implementation Plan has yet to be developed.</p> <p>9.1.2 Annual local self-assessment checks are not regularly scheduled.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>9.1.1 Extend the annual OPSS team plan to create a proactive Safeguarding Implementation Plan, which subsequently needs to be monitored and reviewed.</p> <p>9.1.2 Regularly schedule formal annual local self-assessment checks.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	

<b>Due date</b>	August 2026
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<b>Recommendation #10</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>Indicator No.</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	
10.2.1	The policies and procedures relevant to safeguarding are readily available and accessible to all personnel.	
10.3.1	There are processes in place to monitor how safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.	
10.3.2	There is a process in place to develop and review safeguarding policies and procedures.	
10.5.1	Personnel are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and practical implementation of policies and procedures and provide feedback.	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>10.2.1 Policies and procedures would benefit from greater availability and accessibility across parishes and the community.</p> <p>10.3.1 Implementation at the parish level is consultative and optional, which leads to varying levels of implementation.</p> <p>10.3.2 Consultation with clergy is a strength of OPSS, feedback is obtained on an ad hoc basis.</p> <p>10.5.1 Feedback processes are being enhanced and will be implemented in 2026.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p>10.2.1 Policies and procedures would benefit from greater availability and accessibility across parishes and the community.</p> <p>10.3.1 Implement a regime of regular parish visits by the OPSS focused on self-assessment against the NCSS to monitor how safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.</p> <p>10.3.2 &amp; 10.5.1 Create a formal process for widespread regular feedback on policies and procedures, feedback to be obtained upon reflection of the implementation of such.</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As per recommendations.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Office of Professional Standards and Safeguarding	
<b>Due date</b>	August 2026	

## Appendix A – Compliance Assessment

	General	Processes & Systems	People & Resources
Yet to Develop	As an entity we are unable to demonstrate that the requirements of the indicator are in place and will implement the necessary strategies developed through the Standards Action Plan.	Processes may be in place however the specific requirements of the indicator have not been addressed. The actions generated through the Standards Action Plan will be implemented.	At an entity level resources have yet to be assigned. The people and resources will be determined and allocated in the Standards Action Plan.
Developing	Our entity has begun to address the requirements of the indicator, however processes are developing and not universally applied.	Some relevant processes have been implemented which align with the requirements of the indicator, however they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• siloed; and/or</li> <li>• undocumented; and/or</li> <li>• inconsistent; and/or</li> <li>• lack clarity.</li> </ul>	Personnel capabilities vary across the entity and resources and responsibility are not formally assigned. This will be addressed in the Standards Action Plan.
Developed	Our entity is addressing the indicator and is in the process of implementing its requirements. The gaps will be highlighted and addressed through the Standards Action Plan.	Relevant processes and systems have been defined and developed but are yet to be implemented across the full operations of the entity. A plan is being developed to fully implement processes and systems.	Resources have been assigned and responsibilities defined, however there is no formal training or communication of standard procedures, and it is unlikely that deviations will be detected. This will be remediated through the Standards Action Plan.
Developed & embedded	The entity can demonstrate that indicator requirements are formally embedded. Processes are operating effectively, and opportunities provided for continuous improvement.	Relevant processes are integrated and coordinated, including remote operations and reviews/audits of activities.	Personnel are trained to detect and report on deviations or break downs in processes.  Resources have been assigned to monitor and address requirements.

## Appendix B – Audit Finding Priorities

The following priority ratings have been used to assess findings arising from this audit:

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3
<p>Gaps or control weaknesses have been identified resulting in non-compliance with the indicator.</p> <p>Mitigation actions are required to be developed and initiated as soon as practicable but no later than 30 days from the issuance of this report, with expected resolution within 3 months.</p>	<p>Progress has been made with respect to implementation of the required indicator, however full compliance is yet to be achieved.</p> <p>Mitigation actions are required to be developed and initiated within 3 months or earlier from the issuance</p>	<p>Issues have been identified which represent minor procedural weaknesses or improvement opportunities with respect to the operation of the indicator.</p> <p>Expected resolution is within 12 months or earlier from the issuance of this report.</p>

	of this report, with expected resolution within 6-9 months.	
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## Appendix C - Glossary

The definitions of terms used in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards take into account Australian State, Territory and federal laws and relevant regulations, canon law, information from the Holy See, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse published by the United Nations in 2017.

The glossary does not have any legal force and is meant only to serve as a reference tool for the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. All terms and definitions are to be read in the context of these Standards alone.

<b>Abuse</b>	when used throughout the NCSS document this is an inclusive term covering both child and adult abuse
<b>Abuse of Power</b>	means the abuse of position, function, or duty to take advantage of another. This can take many forms and include situations where a person has power over another person by virtue of their relationship (e.g., employer and employee, teacher and student, coach and athlete, parent or guardian and child, clergy/religious and parishioner) and uses that power to their advantage.
<b>Accessible language</b>	means information is provided in multiple formats for individuals with different levels of English literacy and proficiency, modes of communication, languages, and cognitive abilities.
<b>Adult</b>	means any person 18 years or older. When used throughout the NCSS document this is an inclusive term referring to all adults, including adults at risk.
<b>Adult abuse</b>	<p>means the improper treatment of a person that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm. Abuse can come in many forms, such as: physical or verbal maltreatment, neglect, injury, assault, violation, rape, unjust practices, crimes, exploitation, or other types of aggression.</p> <p>There are several categories of abuse of adults, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual abuse*</li> <li>• Physical abuse*</li> <li>• Emotional/psychological abuse*</li> <li>• Neglect*</li> <li>• Elder abuse*</li> <li>• Financial abuse*</li> <li>• Exploitation*</li> </ul> <p>Within the context of the Catholic church and faith-based entities, it is also important to recognise spiritual abuse* as an additional subtype of abuse.</p>
<b>Adult at risk</b>	means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who are elderly.</li> <li>• with a disability.</li> <li>• who suffer from mental illness.</li> <li>• who have diminished capacity.</li> <li>• who have cognitive impairment.</li> <li>• who have suffered previous abuse.</li> <li>• who are experiencing transient risks.</li> <li>• who in receiving a ministry or service are subject to a power imbalance.</li> <li>• who are from a culturally or linguistically diverse background/</li> <li>• who are of diverse sexuality/</li> <li>• who have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Allegation</b>	means a complaint, still to be verified, claiming, or asserting that someone has committed an act of abuse against a child or adult. The term is used interchangeably and in combination with “complaint”.
<b>Audit</b>	means a mechanism to assess how a Church Authority, ministry or entity governed by a Church Authority, is implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.
<b>Australian Catholic Bishops Conference</b>	means the assembly of Bishops of Australia exercising together certain pastoral offices for the Catholics of Australia.
<b>Bishop</b>	means a diocesan bishop or archbishop, the ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of the Eastern Churches
<b>Canon law</b>	means the revised code of canon law promulgated by His Holiness Pope John Paul II in 1983 and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches as promulgated in 1990 and any other universal or legislation promulgated by the competent ecclesiastical authority.
<b>Canonical Offence</b>	<p>means canonical crimes<sup>1</sup> of sexual abuse committed by clerics and religious are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forcing someone, by violence or threat or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts.</li> <li>• performing sexual acts with a minor or a vulnerable person.</li> <li>• the production, exhibition, possession, or distribution, including by electronic means, of child pornography, as well as by the recruitment of or inducement of a minor or a vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions.</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup> The canonical crimes/delicts/offences committed by clerics or religious as stated in Art. 1 §1 a) of <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i>.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> Definition of vulnerable person as stated in Art. 1 §2 b) of <i>Vos Estis Lux Mundi</i>: “means: any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence”. This definition is captured by the term ‘Adult at risk’ within the NCSS.</p>
<b>Catholic Religious Australia</b>	CRA is the conference of major superiors comprising leaders of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life within the Catholic Church in Australia.
<b>Certification</b>	means the act of giving official authority or approval and certification of the implementation of the NCSS and permission to use the ACSL Certification symbol.
<b>Child/ren</b>	means individuals under 18 years of age.
<b>Child abuse</b>	There are different legal definitions of child abuse in Australia. Definition sourced from the Australian Institute of Family Studies: <a href="https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect">https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect</a>

	<p>Child abuse refers to any behaviour or treatment by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that results in the actual and/or likelihood of causing physical or emotional harm to a child. Such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional and can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission. Child abuse and neglect is commonly divided into five subtypes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical abuse</li> <li>• emotional/psychological abuse</li> <li>• neglect</li> <li>• sexual abuse</li> <li>• exposure to family violence</li> </ul>
<b>Church Authority</b>	<p>means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a diocesan bishop or archbishop, an ordinary of an Ordinariate and the prelate of a Personal Prelature of the Latin Church and an eparch of an eparchy of an Eastern Church.</li> <li>• the competent authority, howsoever titled, exercising the ministry of governance for religious institutes in Australia in accordance with their Constitutions; or</li> <li>• for ministerial PJPS the competent authority in accordance with the statutes.</li> <li>• for any other Church entity, the senior authority within the organization in accordance with its rules.</li> </ul>
<b>Church Protocols</b>	<p>means official procedures or system of rules which govern the affairs of the Catholic Church in Australia, for example, Vos Estis Lux Mundi and the National Response Protocol.</p>
<b>Civil Standard</b>	<p>the most common standard of proof relates to civil proceedings, which is the balance of probabilities (incorporating the principles from <i>Briginshaw v Briginshaw</i>) – which means it is more probable than not that what the person says happened is true (in criminal cases, the standard is proof beyond reasonable doubt).</p>
<b>Clergy</b>	<p>includes bishops, priests and deacons.</p>
<b>Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia</b>	<p>means any cleric or member of a religious institute who is specifically recruited or welcomed from overseas by a Church Authority or entity.</p>
<b>Cleric</b>	<p>a member of the clergy.</p>
<b>Clericalist/ism</b>	<p>means an attitude toward clergy/religious characterised by an excessive deference and an assumption of their moral superiority. Pope Francis has said that it occurs when “clerics feel they are superior, [and when] they are far from the people.” It can be “fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons”.</p>
<b>Cognitive impairment</b>	<p>means when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect their everyday life, because of their condition. Some causes of long-term or permanent cognitive impairment include dementia, stroke, or brain injury.</p> <p>For further information see: <a href="https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment">https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment</a></p>
<b>Complainant</b>	<p>means any person who makes a complaint that may include any allegation, suspicion, concern, or report of a breach of the entity’s Code of Conduct. A complaint may also include disclosures made to an institution that may be about, or relate to, abuse in the entity’s context.</p>

<b>Conflicts of interest</b>	means situations (perceived or actual) where a conflict arises between a person's official duties and their private interests, which could influence the performance of those official duties. Such conflict generally involves opposing principles or incompatible wishes or needs and may occur when personnel function in multiple roles.
<b>Consecrated Life/Institute of Consecrated Life</b>	is an association of faithful in the Catholic Church erected by canon law whose members profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience by vows or other sacred bonds (as defined in the Code of Canon Law under canons 573–730). Apart from being a member of an institute, consecrated life may also be lived individually; the Catholic Church recognises, as forms of individual consecrated life that are not members of institutes, namely that of hermits and consecrated virgins.
<b>Cultural safety</b>	means an environment that is safe for people of all ethnicities and cultural identities: where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.
<b>Dicastery</b>	means a department of the Roman Curia.
<b>Dignity or Right to Risk</b>	refers to enabling individuals the right (or dignity) to take reasonable risks. It recognises that restricting this right can stifle the individual's growth, self-esteem and the overall quality of life:  ‘Given that an individual's personal dignity is manifested, in part, by their ability to remain autonomous, and being autonomous engenders risk-taking. Inhibiting an individual's ability to take risks erodes their dignity. Dignity of risk is therefore the principle of allowing an individual the dignity afforded by risk-taking, subsequently enhancing their personal growth and quality of life.’  (Joseph E Ibrahim and Marie-Claire Davis, ‘Impediments to Applying the “Dignity of Risk” Principle in Residential Aged Care Services: “Dignity of Risk” in Residential Aged Care’, <i>Australasian Journal on Ageing</i> 32, no. 3 (September 2013): 188–93)
<b>Diminished capacity</b>	means if an adult needs to make a decision and is unable to carry out any part of this process (as listed below), they have impaired decision-making capacity. There are three elements to making a decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding the nature and effect of the decision;</li> <li>• freely and voluntarily deciding; and</li> <li>• communicating the decision in some way.</li> </ul>
<b>Diocese</b>	means a diocese, Diocese, ordinariate or personal prelature of the Latin Church and an eparchy of an Eastern Church.
<b>Disability (persons with)</b>	means those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Article 2, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.)
<b>Diversity</b>	means a range of people who have various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds and various lifestyles, experience, and interests.
<b>Diverse sexuality</b>	refers to all the diversities of sex characteristics, sexual orientations, and gender identities, without the need to specify each of the identities, behaviours, or characteristics that form this plurality.
<b>Elder abuse</b>	means a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.

<b>Emotional abuse (adults)</b>	is a common form of abuse that occurs in close relationships. Emotional abuse is defined as abuse that occurs when a person is subjected to behaviours or actions aimed at preventing or controlling their behaviour, with the intent to cause them emotional harm or fear, through manipulation, isolation, or intimidation.
<b>Emotional abuse (children)</b>	Emotional abuse of children refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurturing and emotional availability. Such acts of commission or omission are likely to damage a child's self-esteem or social competence.
<b>Entity</b>	means a diocese, religious institute, ministerial PJP (including their agencies) or association recognised as Catholic in accord with canon law.
<b>Exploitation</b>	is the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over another person. It is taking advantage of another person or situation usually, but not always, for personal gain.
<b>Exposure to family violence</b>	is generally considered to be a form of psychologically abusive behaviour, where a child is present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse, or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violent behaviour.
<b>Financial abuse</b>	involves the illegal or improper use or mismanagement of a person's money, property or resources. Stealing, fraud, forgery, embezzlement, forced changes to a will, inappropriate removal of a resident's decision-making powers and misuse of power of attorney are all forms of financial abuse or exploitation.
<b>Formation/program</b>	means a program preparing individuals for ordination or profession of vows and a life-long journey to the invitation of Christ to proclaim and live the Gospel message, within the life of the Church.
<b>Good Standing</b>	A person in good standing is regarded as having complied with all their safeguarding obligations, and is not subject to any form of allegation, disciplinary process, sanction suspension.
<b>Grooming (child)</b>	refers to a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging a child as a precursor to sexual abuse. It includes establishing a 'special' friendship/relationship with the child. Grooming can include the conditioning of parents and other adults to think that the relationship with the child is 'normal' and positive.
<b>Grooming (adult)</b>	is the predatory act of manoeuvring another individual into a position that makes them more isolated, dependent, likely to trust, and more vulnerable to abusive behaviour.
<b>Guardian</b>	refers to the person(s) who has the legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of another person.
<b>Institutional abuse</b>	means abuse or poor care within an institution or specific care setting. Possible causes of institutional abuse include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a "closed" culture within an organisation where transparency is discouraged.</li> <li>• lack of flexibility and choice for people using the service.</li> <li>• failure to properly check the backgrounds and interview staff.</li> <li>• inadequate training.</li> <li>• lack of safeguarding policies and procedures.</li> <li>• lack of support of staff by management.</li> <li>• poor supervision; and</li> <li>• poor standards of care.</li> </ul>
<b>Lay/lay person</b>	means members of the Catholic Church and Church personnel other than bishops, priests, deacons and religious.

<b>Leaders</b>	means personnel who are responsible for important governance decisions within a Church entity and/or who lead and coordinate Church improvement initiatives.
<b>Mentor</b>	means an experienced and trusted advisor or a person who gives a younger or less experienced person help and advice over a period.
<b>Ministerial PJP</b>	means a legal entity which is constituted a public juridic person in canon law and carries on its mission in the name of the Church, in accordance with its statutes approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority.
<b>Ministry</b>	means any activity within, or conducted by, an entity, that is authorised by formal appointment and designed to carry out the apostolic and charitable works of the Catholic Church.
<b>NDIS Worker Screening Check</b>	The NDIS Worker Screening Check is an assessment of whether a person who works, or seeks to work, with people with disability poses a risk to them. The assessment determines whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability. For further information see <a href="https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/ndis-worker-screening-check">https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/ndis-worker-screening-check</a>
<b>Neglect (adult)</b>	is the failure of a carer to provide the necessities of life to a person for whom they are caring.
<b>Neglect (child)</b>	refers to a failure by a caregiver to provide the basic requirements for meeting the physical and emotional developmental needs of a child. Physically neglectful behaviours include a failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, hygiene or medical attention.
<b>Offender</b>	means a person who has admitted abuse or whose responsibility for abuse has been determined by a court of law (criminal or civil), statutory or Church procedure.
<b>Organisation</b>	means a ministry and/or service operating under the governance of a recognised authority (such as a legal entity) and/or a Church Authority.
<b>Pastoral care</b>	means when one person has responsibility for the wellbeing of another or for a faith community. It includes the provision of spiritual advice and support, education, counselling, medical care, and assistance in times of need. All work involving the supervision or education of children and young people is a work of pastoral care.
<b>Personnel (Church personnel)</b>	means a cleric, religious or other person who is employed by the entity or engaged on a contract, subcontract, voluntary or unpaid basis.
<b>Physical abuse</b>	is a non-accidental physically aggressive act which results in physical pain or injury, and which may include physical coercion and physical restraint. Physical abuse may be intentional or may be the inadvertent result of physical punishment.
<b>Professional/pastoral supervision</b>	means a professional activity in which personnel are engaged in reflection and learning, under the guidance of a supervisor. Supervision assists personnel in their accountabilities for professional standards, defined competencies for their role and understanding and implementation of organisational policy and procedures. For clerics and religious, professional supervision assists in the maintenance of boundaries of the pastoral relationship and enhances the quality of their ministry.
<b>Protective behaviours program</b>	Is a type of abuse prevention program and means an age-appropriate structured education program to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge to enhance their personal safety.
<b>Reflective practice</b>	is a professional development technique that involves thoughtfully considering one's own experiences in applying knowledge to practice. It is expected to be a continuous process, whereby an individual explores an experience to identify what happened and what their role in this experience was, including behaviour,

	thinking, and related emotions. Reflective practice enables potential changes in approaches to similar future events to be identified, with the aim of improved performance.
<b>Registration to Work with Vulnerable People</b>	the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013 (Tasmanian Legislation) requires people who work or volunteer with vulnerable people, including children to hold a registration.
<b>Religious institute</b>	means an entity within the Catholic Church whose members commit themselves through religious vows to lead a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Societies of apostolic life resemble religious institutes in that their members also live a life in common. They do not take religious vows but live out the apostolic purpose of the group. In these Standards, the term 'religious institutes' is used to include religious institutes, societies of apostolic life and secular institutes.
<b>Religious</b>	means a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life.
<b>Respondent</b>	means a person against whom a complaint is made.
<b>Review</b>	means an internal self-assessment of an entity's implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. A review can also be an assessment that forms part of the process of continuous improvement which occurs when following up recommendations made during an audit.
<b>Risk-based audit and Review Framework</b>	means a framework for assessing the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards that reflects a proportionate response based on the risk profile of the Church Authority.
<b>Risk Profile</b>	means an assessment against key safeguarding risk factors.
<b>Safeguarding</b>	refers to proactive measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals. These measures allow children, young people and adults to live free from abuse, harm and neglect. Within the life of the Church, safeguarding includes pastoral, liturgical and spiritual responses through engagement in the Sacraments and the life of the Church.
<b>Safeguarding Committee</b>	means a committee established to advise and support the Church Authority on all matters relating to safeguarding, including the development and implementation of a Safeguarding Implementation Plan and coordinating annual self-audits at a local level. Committee members need relevant and varied professional expertise in relation to safeguarding, child protection, organisational culture and structure, policy development, etc. and include lay women and men.
<b>Safeguarding Culture</b>	means embedding safeguarding into everything an organisation does. In promoting this culture, young people and adults at risk will understand they will be listened to, supported, and known action will be taken on their behalf.
<b>Safeguarding Commitment Statement</b>	means a Commitment Statement describing an entity's commitment to keep children and adults safe from harm. It informs the entity's safeguarding culture.
<b>Safeguarding Co-ordinator</b>	means an individual who champions safeguarding and co-ordinates the implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards within an entity.
<b>Safeguarding Implementation Plan</b>	means a documented plan which articulates actions to be taken across the entity to ensure safeguarding practices are in place. It includes actions, strategies, responsibilities, delegations, and accountabilities, and tracks review and progress. It is overseen by the Safeguarding Committee.
<b>Safeguarding policies and procedures</b>	means any policies or procedures of the entity that address elements of safeguarding children and adults. For example, but not limited to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recruitment.</li> <li>• risk management.</li> <li>• complaint handling; and</li> <li>• acceptable use of online applications.</li> </ul>
<b>Seminarian</b>	a student in a theological formation and education centre preparing for ordination as a priest.
<b>Seminary</b>	means a centre for the formation and education of students preparing for ordination.
<b>Sexual abuse (adult)</b>	Sexual abuse is a form of sexual assault. Sexual abuse includes rape, indecent assault, sexual harassment, and sexual interference. Sexual activity with an adult who is incapacitated by a mental or physical condition (such as dementia) that impairs his or her ability to grant informed consent, is defined as sexual assault/abuse. Sexual assault/abuse includes where through force, threats or abuse of authority, an individual commits a canonical offence or forces someone to perform or submit to sexual acts. Sexual assault is a crime.
<b>Sexual abuse (child)</b>	refers to exposing a child to any form of sexual activity. This may or may not involve physical contact. This may take the form of taking sexually explicit photographs or videos of children, forcing children to watch or take part in sexual acts and forcing or coercing children to have sex or engage in sexual acts with other children or adults.
<b>Spiritual abuse</b>	means abuse of a person that invokes a person's religious beliefs and faith to perpetrate harm. Spiritual abuse can occur as a secondary experience of abuse when abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of spiritual authority and trust within the Church a
<b>Substantiated complaint</b>	means under the civil standard of proof an allegation of abuse for which the investigator finds that sufficient evidence exists to believe that the alleged conduct more likely than not occurred.
<b>Third parties</b>	means any individual, group or legal entity outside the Church entity who contract services and facilities to or from the Church entity.
<b>Transient Risk</b>	means short-term risk, experienced by people at different stages in their life: e.g. when someone is vulnerable due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grief</li> <li>• bereavement</li> <li>• relationship breakdown</li> <li>• homelessness</li> <li>• unemployment</li> <li>• financial hardship</li> </ul>
<b>Trauma-informed and victim-centred support</b>	is a strengths-based framework which is founded on five core principles – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Trauma-informed services do no harm: they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible. In trauma-informed services, trauma survivors are seen as unique individuals who have managed their responses to the experiences as best that they could.
<b>Validation</b>	means an assessment by ACSL of any self-assessment, review or audit, undertaken to achieve ACSL Certification status.
<b>Working With Children Check</b>	means generic term used in the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards to denote the statutory screening requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. There is not yet a single national framework setting out requirements for 'working with children' checks. Each State/Territory in Australia has its own system. They are one part of a Church entity's recruitment, selection, and screening practices.

**Working with  
Vulnerable People  
Check**

means the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 in the Australian Capital Territory which requires those working with children (and other vulnerable groups) to complete a Working with Vulnerable People Check and be registered before they can commence employment.

Tasmania has a 'Working with Vulnerable People Check' which requires all employees and volunteers aged 16 and over working in childcare services or other child-related services to apply for a WWVP check.

To date, only the ACT and Tasmania have this requirement.