



**St Vincent de Paul Society**

NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.

*good works*

# **St Vincent de Paul Society, National Council of Australia**

## **Safeguarding Audit Report June 2026**

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 St Vincent de Paul's 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 St Vincent de Paul National Council of Australia (NCA) and its representatives at the time of the assessment and where applicable any further subsequent information the Society 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.

# NATIONAL PRESIDENT, ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

## Opinion

ACSL has undertaken a safeguarding audit of a sample of Society's leadership and the Safeguarding Unit office activities of National Council. This audit comprises an analysis of the Self-Assessment undertaken against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, interviews with the Society's personnel and follow up conversations. ACSL considers that the audit evidence obtained from the Society is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for this opinion.

In ACSL's opinion, this report for St Vincent de Paul National Council offers a true and fair view of National Council's safeguarding policies, procedures and processes as of 31 March 2026 and of its performance against the NCSS for the period ended on that date.

ACSL is independent of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia 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.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the, St. Vincent de Paul Society National Council Secretariat, and its representatives at the time of the assessment and, where applicable, any subsequent information them has supplied through the reporting process. ACSL thank National Council for the cooperation and support during the audit process.

Certification issued by ACSL and/or its accredited auditors is based on sampling the National Council ministries at a point in time. It therefore does not guarantee the ongoing safety or quality of the organisation, its future services or programs.

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

# 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://acsltd.org.au).

This audit report includes the results of the assessment against the NCSS for the National Council, St Vincent de Paul.

## 1.2 Background

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is an international lay Catholic organisation of men and women founded in France in 1833 by a group of Catholic lay people who formed the first Conference. The Society is Catholic in its origins, and its Mission is steeped in Vincentian spirituality and Catholic Social Teaching.

The vocation of the Society's members, who are known as Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Vincentians demonstrate their commitment through person-to-person contact.

St. Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia (NCA) is instituted by the International Council General. The Society is governed by *The Rule* (this version will be operationalized from July 2026: [svdp-national-council-the-rule-part-iii.pdf](#)). The function of NCA extend to domestic and international environments (as outlined in Part III Article 21) and include:

- Oversight of the NCSS across all Councils and their related bodies corporate in Australia;
- Support the Conferences and the Society's members;
- Ensure that the principles and *The Rule* of the Society are upheld;
- Animate and co-ordinate the activities of the Society in Australia;
- Set the strategic mission and vision of the Society in Australia;
- Work for greater unity of the Society in Australia;
- Inform Conferences and Councils of the activities of the Society national and internationally;
- Represent the Society to religious and civil authorities on a national basis and particularly in the area of social justice advocacy;
- Draw up and amend, in a spirit of consultation, rules for the functioning of the Society in Australia;
- Inform the Society's Members of the International Council General of the activities of the Society in Australia and through annual reports;
- Approve the boundaries of all Councils on the recommendations of the appropriate State or Territory Council;
- Uphold the spirit of *The Rule* throughout all Councils and Conferences by means of access, where necessary, to all funds and other information. State or Territory Councils may be authorised to perform this function where appropriate;
- Ensure that the basic principles of the Society are represented;
- Settle authoritatively any question submitted by any Council or Conference about the meaning or effect of the Rule in Australia;
- Supporting oversea National Councils with whom ANC is 'twinned'. This includes coordinating the transfer of financial supports from Conference and Councils in Australia to twinned National Councils. Twinned National Councils distribute these funds to adults at risk and children in overseas communities via lower Councils and Conferences.

NCA generally does not provide direct ministries or services that engage with children or adults at risk.

The Society in Australia consists of over 1,000 Conferences, that make up Diocesan/Central/Regional and State and Territory Councils. The National Council is the Superior Council of the Society in Australia. through a national council, six state councils and two territory Councils. NCA decisions are binding upon all Conferences and lower Councils in Australia.

The Society supports and follows the principle of subsidiarity.

The confederation is governed by *The Rule*. NCA, in collaboration with each State and Territory Council, authorises the establishment of the legal entities that operate in Australia in the name of the St Vincent de Paul Society. These can include related entities

established by a State or Territory Council. Together, the nine councils assist the Society's Members to carry out 'good works'. Good works include a broad array of support to those in need including children and adults at risk. The essence of the Society's approach to offering support is one-to-one contact and walking beside those who have needs the Society can respond to. Those people who receive support from local Conferences are referred to as 'Companions'.

### **1.3 Audit classification**

National Council Australia (NCA) has been assessed by ACSL as a Church entity needing to undertake a limited NCSS Audit, as the Council does not deal directly with children.

There are seven Standards, with 88 NCSS indicators of which 70 apply to NCA. For further details of the risk-based audit framework, refer to the [ACSL website](#).

Our assessment of National Council's compliance with the NCSS indicators is detailed in Section 3 of this report. Our recommendations for improvement, including their management responses, are included in Section 5 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 we have 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 St. Vincent de Paul National Council, 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.

ASCL utilises an efficient risk assessment mechanism that permits its auditors to focus their efforts 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.

ASCL 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 thus 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

The St. Vincent de Paul Society's National Council (NCA) was assessed against Edition 2 of the NCSS, covering both children and adults at risk. In March 2026, ACSL completed a review audit of National Council's NCSS Self-Assessment, which provided them with an opportunity to present their evidence of their congruency with the NCSS. Fieldwork was conducted from 30 to 31 March 2026. The auditors spent 2 days interviewing key personnel and reviewing documentation. The report was completed in May 2026.

The audit scope included:

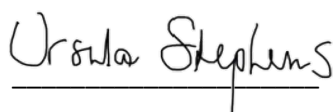
- Audit activities at National Council's Secretariate Office in Deakin, ACT.
- Interviews, observations, and enquiry with National Council leadership, including their Safeguarding Committee and relevant ministerial personnel.
- A review of key safeguarding documents, policies, and procedures.
- Assessment of the design and testing of the operation of safeguarding controls implemented by National Council.
- Interviews with 10 personnel drawn from National Council and the Secretariate.

## 1.5 Disclaimer

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

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Signed:



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Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd



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

## 2. Overarching findings

***The NCSS assessment of National Council, St Vincent de Paul indicates that the Society is successfully implementing and embedding a culture of safeguarding throughout its organisation.***

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

Our assessment indicates that National Council has fully implemented or has substantially progressed in the implementation of 69 (99%) of the relevant indicators to their operations.

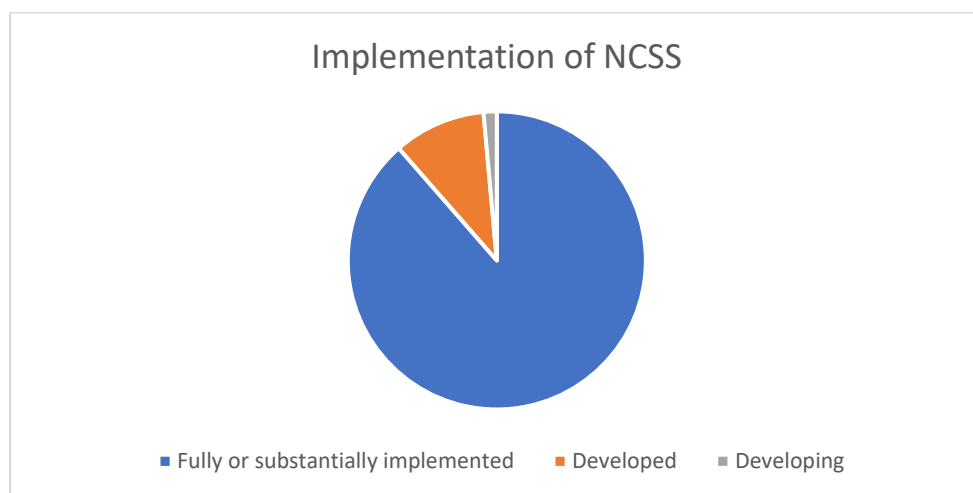
Assessment for each maturity scale is as follows:

- 62 (89%) indicators are developed and embedded
- 7 (10%) indicators are substantially progressed
- 1 (1%) indicators are developing.

Of the 88 NCSS indicators applicable to entities undertaking a limited audit, 18 of these are not relevant to National Council's operations.

### Note on scoring:

- 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**.



<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 area below.



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

There is strong leadership across National Council in promoting a safeguarding culture. This has been actively promoted by the National President, Chief Executive Officer, the Safeguarding Unit office and key leaders within National Council.

The focus in Standards 1 and 9 is on how National Council leadership influences and implements a positive safeguarding culture across its ministries. The key personnel in National Council 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.

National Council has a team of people who are developing the framework for working with their ministries or funded overseas programs. The audit team met with the coordinator responsible for the overseas ministry however this ministry is outside of this audit scope. We would recommend National Council continues to understand these local cultures and find entry points with partners to ensure safeguarding strategies can be implemented and monitored. National Council reviews their safeguarding materials regularly and provides ministries with any updated information. These safeguarding policies, procedures and processes are planned to be reviewed on a three-year cyclical basis. The audit made two recommendations to National Council to improve governance and monitoring. These are, working with States and Territories to adapt Council's overarching Risk Management Framework to fully embed the framework across all ministries. National Council could also provide clarity to all Society's personnel on responsibility for record keeping in respect to Companion ministry.



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

These standards are focused on personnel who are engaged in ministry. The National Council Secretariate staff do not engage with children and adults as part of their core duties. Nonetheless, their probation and performance review documents explicitly reference safeguarding responsibilities. These people, and their capacity to fulfill their ministry and be formed to do so, are critical to the success of implementing safeguarding. In meeting this capability area, National Council strives to recruit appropriately skilled people to the right role to implement their ministry. In general, National Council recognises the training and support needs associated with specific roles and provides appropriate safeguarding training activities.

National Council's recruitment practices follow strong human resource management practices. There are comprehensive recruitment policies and procedures that outline safeguarding requirements in advertising, vetting, and screening of personnel. All National Council personnel screening checks are

monitored through a centralized system. Personnel undertake safeguarding induction prior to commencing in their roles. All National Council personnel participate in supervision.

National Council recognises that specific roles within ministries and across States and Territories require differing safeguarding training and differing support needs. The Council has a safeguarding training program (induction and refresher) for their personnel, which is documented, structured and comprehensive. Regular training focuses on safeguarding, including dimensions of the NCSS and other recognised safeguarding standards. The safeguarding training recognises personnel need training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and adults.

There are four areas of improvement recommended for National Council :

- for all recruitment process to specifically state Council's commitment to zero tolerance of abuse.
- To develop a position statement for the roles of National President, Vice-President and Treasurer.
- Ensure all future volunteers have two referee checks prior to commencing ministry.
- To roll-out the cultural training plan which National Council have planned this year.



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

ACSL does not investigate any individual complaint during a safeguarding audit. Instead, the focus is on the system being implemented to manage concerns or allegations of abuse. National Council processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood and accessible. Processes are formally documented in National Council's policies and procedures and are made publicly available. For Standard 8, the audit focused on risk management strategies implemented and how this results in minimising opportunities for abuse to occur in both physical and online environments. Standard 10 assesses how effectively the National Council's safeguarding policies and procedures are being documented, managed and implemented.

National Council's Complaints Handling Policy is comprehensive and includes a risk assessment at point of referral. National Council's Safeguarding records are kept for a minimum of 50 years as documented in the Privacy Policy and implemented as a minimum standard. The Complaint Management policies empower personnel and others to make safeguarding complaints in good faith. The policies offer all parties involved in a safeguarding complaint with appropriate support. Personnel interviewed advised that complaints are taken seriously and investigated promptly and thoroughly.

National Council ministries are aware of the importance of physical and IT environment and have processes in place to keep spaces open and monitored. Risk management plans address the range of settings, activities and physical environments in which ministry occurs. National Council does not hire out premises to third parties.

The audit made two recommendations to National Council to update their policies and processes. These are, for National Council to develop and implement guidelines that conferences will adhere to and support when members are visiting companions. In addition, for National Council to develop and implement guidelines that conferences will adhere to when members are visiting companions.

**Table 1: Summary of NCSS Assessment**

National Catholic Safeguarding Standard	# NCSS indicators	Not Relevant	Assessment of Implementation			
			Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
<i>1: Committed leadership, governance &amp; culture</i>	<b>17</b>	1	14	2	-	-
<i>5: Robust human resource management</i>	<b>22</b>	13	7	2	-	-
<i>6: Effective complaints management</i>	<b>19</b>	2	16	1	-	-
<i>7: Ongoing training &amp; education</i>	<b>11</b>	-	9	2	-	-
<i>8: Safe physical and online environments</i>	<b>7</b>	1	5	-	1	-
<i>9: Continuous improvement</i>	<b>6</b>	1	5	-	-	-
<i>10: Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults</i>	<b>6</b>	-	6	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>70</b>		<b>99%</b>		<b>1%</b>	

### 3. Summary of recommendations

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

- There are no Priority 1 (high rated) audit recommendations for National Council.
- There are 3 Priority 2 (medium rated) recommendations.
- There are no Priority 3 (low rated) recommendations.

<b>Recommendation #1</b>	1.1 National Council’s overarching and comprehensive Risk Management Framework will be fully embedded in their activities in the next 12 months.
	1.2 As the ‘Church Authority’ for safeguarding, National Council will clarify guidelines outlining personnel’s responsibility of recording keeping in respect to Companion ministries and consistently apply throughout the Society.
<b>Recommendation #2</b>	2.1 Position description for the National President, Deputy President, Vice-President and Treasurer will be developed.
	2.2 All future personnel will have 2 referee checks prior to commencing with National Council.
	2.3 National Council will roll out their additional training on cultural safety for personnel.
<b>Recommendation #3</b>	3.1 National Council will stipulate mandatory reporting obligations on their website.
	3.2 As the ‘Church Authority’ for safeguarding, National Council will clarify guidelines for Conference members providing support to Society’s companions – this includes protocols for home visits.

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

We would like to thank the leadership team of St. Vincent de Paul and all personnel who were involved in the audit for their cooperation and assistance.

<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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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 applicable			

<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 1.4 – The entity’s Code of Conduct sets clear behavioural standards towards children and adults.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
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.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 1.5 - The entity’s risk management plan focuses on preventing, identifying, and mitigating safeguarding risks to children and adults.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
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> 1.5.1 The fieldwork investigation revealed that National Council has developed an overarching and comprehensive Risk Management Framework which will be fully embedded in their activities in the next 12 months. Refer <a href="#">Recommendation #1</a> .					
<b>Criterion 1.6 - Personnel understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping for safeguarding and professional standards.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
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 The guidelines outlining personnel’s understanding of recording keeping in respect to Companion ministries could be clarified and consistently applied throughout the Society. <a href="#">Recommendation #1</a> .					

Standard 5		Robust human resource management			
<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> 5.1.3 A position description for the National President, Deputy President, Vice-President and Treasurer will assist the Society in assessing the risk associated with these positions. Refer recommendation #2.					
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> 5.2.1 The fieldwork noted that not all volunteers have 2 referee checks. Refer recommendation #2.					
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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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> 6.1.1Mandatory reporting could be more clearly stipulated in complaints handling policy by a statement regarding reporting obligations. The process is outlined in the policy and additional clarity is provided through the information made available on the website. Refer recommendation #3.					
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>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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.	Not Applicable			
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.	Not Applicable			
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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</li> </ul>	✓			

	<p>against adults be reported to statutory authorities; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.</li> </ul>				
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

Standard 7		Ongoing education and training			
<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	<p>The entity's induction and refresher Safeguarding of Children and Adults training must as a minimum cover:</p> <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>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.2 - Personnel are supported to recognise the nature and indicators of child abuse, including harmful behaviours by a child towards another child.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
7.2.1	<p>Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place children at risk of abuse, building knowledge to:</p> <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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.3 – Personnel are supported to recognise the factors that contribute to adult abuse, with a focus on adults at risk.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
7.3.1	<p>Education and training programs include materials addressing factors that may place adults at risk of abuse, building knowledge to:</p> <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>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.4 - Personnel have the information and skills to respond effectively to safeguarding risks, concerns, disclosures, and allegations of abuse.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
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>				
<b>Observations:</b>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
<b>Criterion 7.5 - Personnel receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and adults.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
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>Observations:</b>					
7.5.1 & 7.5.2 National Council is planning additional training on cultural safety for personnel in May 2026. Refer recommendation #2.					

<b>Standard 8</b>		<b>Safe physical and online environments</b>			
<i>Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.</i>					
<b>Criterion 8.1 – The Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy addresses both physical and online risks, without compromising the individual’s right to privacy or wellbeing.</b>		<b>Developed &amp; Embedded</b>	<b>Developed</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Yet to Develop</b>
8.1.1	<p>Both physical and online risks are addressed within 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 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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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> 8.3.1. National council have yet to develop and implement guidelines that conferences will adhere and support when members are visiting companions. Refer recommendation #3.					
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.	Not applicable			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted					

<b>Standard 9</b>		<b>Continuous improvement</b>			
<b><i>Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe.</i></b>					
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 coordinates 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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted					
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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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 – this is the first audit by ACSL			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

<b>Standard 10</b>		<b>Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults</b>			
<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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					
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 indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement 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> Requirements of the indicators are in place. No recommendations for improvement noted.					

## 5. Detailed findings

<b>Recommendation #1</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>1.5.1</b>	<b>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).</b>	
<b>1.6.1</b>	<b>Information sharing and record keeping policies and procedures are documented and communicated to personnel.</b>	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>The following points were noted:</p> <p>1.5.1 The fieldwork investigation revealed that National Council has developed an overarching and comprehensive Risk Management Framework which will be fully embedded in their activities in the next 12 months.</p> <p>1.6.1 The guidelines outlining personnel’s understanding of recording keeping in respect to Companion ministries could be clarified and consistently applied throughout the Society.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Council’s overarching and comprehensive Risk Management Framework will be fully embedded in their activities in the next 12 months.</li> <li>As the ‘Church Authority’ for safeguarding, National Council will clarify guidelines outlining personnel’s responsibility of recording keeping in respect to Companion ministries and ensure consistently apply throughout the Society</li> </ol>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	National Council agrees to implement the recommendations	
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Council, Chief Executive Officer	
<b>Due date</b>	1 July 2027	

<b>Recommendation #2</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>5.1.3</b>	<b>Positions are assessed for the expected level of contact with children and/or adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented.</b>	
<b>5.2.1</b>	<b>All personnel are required to have a background check and clearance (as relevant to their role).</b>	
<b>7.5.1</b>	<b>Cultural safety training is provided to equip personnel to create culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</b>	
<b>7.5.2</b>	<b>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>	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>The following points were noted:</p> <p>5.1.3 A position description for the National President, Deputy President, Vice-President and Treasurer will assist the Society in assessing the risk associated with these positions.</p> <p>5.2.1 The fieldwork noted that not all volunteers have 2 referee checks.</p>	

	7.5.1 & 7.5.2 National Council is planning additional training on cultural safety for personnel in May 2026.
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Position description for the National President, Deputy President, Vice-President and Treasurer will be developed.</li> <li>2. All future personnel will have 2 referee checks prior to commencing with National Council.</li> <li>3. National Council will roll out their additional training on cultural safety for personnel.</li> </ol>
<b>Agreed Action</b>	National Council agrees to implement the recommendations
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Council, Chief Executive Officer
<b>Due date</b>	1 July 2027

<b>Recommendation #3</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
<b>6.1.1</b>	<b>Policies and procedures address mandatory reporting obligations.</b>	
<b>8.3.1</b>	<b>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>	
<b>Details of finding</b>	<p>The following points were noted:</p> <p>6.1.1 Mandatory reporting could be more clearly stipulated in complaints handling policy by a statement regarding reporting obligations. The process is outlined in the policy and additional clarity is provided through the information made available on the website.</p> <p>8.3.1. National council have yet to develop and implement guidelines that conferences will adhere to and support when members are visiting companions.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National Council will stipulate mandatory reporting obligations on their website.</li> <li>2. As the 'Church Authority', National Council will clarify guidelines for Conference Members providing support to Society's Companions – this includes home visits.</li> </ol>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	National Council agrees to implement the recommendations	
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Council, Chief Executive Officer	
<b>Due date</b>	1 July 2027	

## 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 and 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 60 days from the issuance of this report, with expected resolution within 6 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 of this report, with expected resolution within 9-12 months.</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 18 months or earlier from the issuance of this report.</p>

## 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>.  <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>	<p>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> <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>	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.
<b>Civil Standard</b>	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).
<b>Clergy</b>	includes bishops, priests and deacons.
<b>Clergy and religious from countries other than Australia</b>	means any cleric or member of a religious institute who is specifically recruited or welcomed from overseas by a Church Authority or entity.
<b>Cleric</b>	a member of the clergy.

<b>Clericalist/ism</b>	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”.
<b>Cognitive impairment</b>	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. For further information see: <a href="https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment">https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/cognitive-impairment</a>
<b>Complainant</b>	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.
<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', Australasian Journal on Ageing 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, archdiocese, ordinariate or personal prelatore 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>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.
<b>Working with Vulnerable People Check</b>	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.