



# **Catholic Diocese of Lismore**

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## **NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS AUDIT REPORT**

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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 (NCSS). Certification achievement is measured against the NCSS set by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) 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 Lismore's performance against the NCSS. 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 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.

# 1. Audit background

## 1.1 About ACSL and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

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 courage, compassion, and honesty. These values guide the way ACSL works and inform cultural change within the Catholic Church and the wider community. ACSL takes its duty to care for and protect all children and adults at risk seriously and has zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (the National Principles) in 2019. 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).

This audit report includes the results of the assessment against the NCSS for the Catholic Diocese of Lismore (the Diocese).

## 1.2 Auditor credentials

The audit was conducted by Demetrius Consulting, an ACSL accredited auditor listed on the ACSL's NCSS Auditor Register. NCSS auditors must complete ACSL's Auditor Induction Program prior to

carrying out safeguarding audits of Church entities against the NCSS. Prior to being engaged by an entity to conduct an NCSS audit, they must also satisfy conflicts of interest requirements.<sup>1</sup>

Demetrius Consulting – a practice specialising in safeguarding work – was established by Julianna Demetrius in 2019 following more than 19 years with the NSW Ombudsman in several senior and statutory roles. Julianna has extensive experience in complaint handling, conciliation, overseeing abuse and neglect investigations involving children and vulnerable adults, and leading major systemic reviews and audits across a broad range of human service and justice spheres. Demetrius Consulting has been engaged by a range of state and federal regulatory bodies to develop safeguarding guidelines, and regularly conducts safeguarding investigations, audits, policy development and training for Catholic and other entities working with children and at-risk adults. Julianna is both a chairperson and member of several safeguarding committees for religious and child serving organisations. Julianna was admitted as a solicitor to the NSW Supreme Court in 1999.

### 1.3 Catholic Diocese of Lismore

The Catholic Diocese of Lismore in Northern New South Wales stretches from the Queensland border to Laurieton, covering a substantial distance of approximately 460km.

Most Rev Gregory Homeming OCD assumed office as the sixth Bishop of Lismore in February 2017.

The Diocese has three deaneries - Northern, Central and Southern - and 22 parishes.



Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Ltd (DLCS) governs and administers a network of 45 Catholic schools within the Diocese. Trinity Catholic College Lismore Ltd governs Trinity Catholic College. The Diocese is a member of both companies.

St Vincent's Private Hospital and St Joseph's Aged Care in Lismore are owned by the Diocese and governed by a Board of Directors and executive team.

In addition, parishes own and operate a variety of aged care residential and support services, as well as early education and care and out-of-school hours care services. St Agnes Parish Port Macquarie operates under a unique governance structure which includes two companies: St Agnes Assist and St Agnes Care and Lifestyle. Its Chief Executive Officer is responsible for all financial, operational and personnel matters. Each service area is led by a General Manager who is responsible for specific service operations and delivery.

The Diocese does not have a seminary. The Chancery, which oversees the pastoral and administrative governance of the Diocese and includes the Safeguarding

<sup>1</sup> ACSL, *Guidance Note on Managing Conflicts of Interest in Engaging an NCSS Auditor*, March 2023.

Office, is located in the far North NSW town of Lismore.

The 2021 National Catholic Census indicates the Diocese has a Catholic population of 97,971 people (18% of the total population) with a median age of 50 years. Of this population, 16.2% are aged 0-14 years, 27.5% are aged over 65, 11,323 members live alone, 11,137 people were born overseas and 441 people do not speak English well.<sup>2</sup> The Diocese reports that its communities include people of Indigenous, Anglo, Indian, Filipino, Maltese, Lebanese, Bolivian, Sri Lankan, Italian, Sudanese, Vietnamese and Chinese origin.

As in other dioceses, institutional child abuse has historically occurred in the Diocese of Lismore, and this is acknowledged in its Safeguarding Commitment Statement.

### **1.4 In scope assessment**

The Diocese was assessed by ACSL as a Church entity required to undertake a full NCSS audit. For further details of the risk-based audit framework, refer to the [ACSL website](#).

There are 10 NCSS Standards, 48 NCSS Criteria and 104 NCSS Indicators.<sup>3</sup>

The audit scope, as agreed between the Diocese and ACSL,<sup>4</sup> is outlined below:

- Diocesan Leadership and Governance where the field work and site visits will consider how overarching policies and procedures support safeguarding efforts across the diocese.
- Confirmation and attestation that regulatory requirements are being met for WWCC, record keeping and complaints management.
- Adequacy of recruitment, training and supervision policies and practices for clergy, staff and volunteers.
- Safeguarding management relating to how the Diocese undertakes safeguarding risks for children and adults at risk.
- Site visits to six parishes across the diocese and a primary school in the Port Macquarie parish.
- Declaration of Assurance relating to one Early Learning Centre providing information about safeguarding policies and practices within that environment (this was completed by St Joseph's Family Services within the St Agnes Parish in Port Macquarie).
- Declaration of Assurance relating to Lismore Catholic Education schools, activities and facilities.

The following were excluded from the audit scope by agreement between the Diocese and ACSL:

- Hospital, Aged Care and other regulated Community Services operating under the Bishop's authority

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research, Diocesan Social Profile, *Diocese of Lismore*, July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> The scope of NCSS Edition 1, released in 2019, was limited to children. NCSS Edition 2, released in 2022, expanded the scope to also cover adults at risk.

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated 4 March 2025 to Bishop Homeing from Dr Ursula Stephens (CEO, ACSL).

## 1.5 Audit approach

The audit approach was designed to provide reasonable assurance that safeguarding controls have been designed appropriately and are operating effectively in the Diocese. The audit report provides a point-in-time assessment of the safeguarding approach implemented by the Diocese and the extent to which it meets the requirements of the NCSS.

The assessment of the Diocese's implementation of the NCSS Indicators was determined using a four-point Compliance Assessment Scale developed by ACSL (Appendix 1). The scale was applied having regard to the Diocese's overall performance. The findings of the assessment are detailed in sections 2 and 3 of the report. Our recommendations, and the Diocese's responses, are contained in section 4.

A key component of the audit involved reviewing the Diocese's NCSS Self- Assessment, which provided the Diocese with an opportunity to document evidence of their compliance with the NCSS Standards. The Diocese provided policies, procedures, guidelines, factsheets, training materials and other resources which was reviewed during July 2025 ahead of undertaking site visits. Not all this material is directly referred to in this report, but it has collectively informed our assessment of the Diocese against relevant NCSS Indicators.

Fieldwork was conducted between 21-25 July 2025. The audit commenced with a joint opening meeting with Very Rev Bishop Homeming, Rev Paul Gooley (Vicar for Safeguarding), Ms. Julie Patston (Safeguarding Manager) and Ms. Christine Thompson (Safeguarding Education and Compliance Officer).

The parishes of Ballina, Byron Bay, Coffs Harbour, Kingscliff, Macleay Valley (Kempsey) and Port Macquarie were selected for visits to assess the implementation of safeguarding practices. The parishes selected provide a diverse sample of the differing social, economic and geographic factors present in the Diocese. Prior to our visits, each parish provided documents as evidence of their NCSS compliance, which we reviewed. The type and amount of documentation differed depending on the nature and size of the parish, however, all parishes were forthcoming with relevant information.

During the parish visits, we interviewed more than 30 people including parish and assistant priests, deacons and key parish staff and volunteers with responsibilities for specific safeguarding requirements and key ministries. We also inspected parish records. In our interviews with personnel, we focused on assessing their knowledge and understanding of the dimensions of safeguarding most relevant to their specific role and the area of the Diocese they work in.

In Port Macquarie, we also visited St Agnes Primary School and interviewed the principal, Brendan Kiely and Area Director (Lismore Catholic Schools), Cath Eichman.

From the Chancery, we interviewed (in addition to Bishop, Vicar for Safeguarding, Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Education and Compliance Officer):

- Personal Assistant to Bishop - Nancy Tarlinton
- Clerical Assistant - Lew Wallace

- Manager, People Safety and Wellbeing – Ruby Dimmick
- Program Manager – James Hay
- Diocesan IT Manager – Ben Hansen
- Technical Services & Cyber Security Manager – Anthony Primiano
- Communications Officer – Barry de Silva
- Pastoral Projects Leader – Dr Madeline Beveridge

On 25 July 2025, we shared some initial audit observations with the Vicar for Safeguarding. A draft audit report was provided to the Diocese on 15 September. After incorporating feedback received from the Diocese on 23 October 2025, the report was finalised and provided to ACSL on 26 October 2025. It is publicly available on the Publications and Reports page of the [ACSL website](#). The Diocese has also committed to publish the report on its website.

### **1.6 Disclaimer**

The information contained in this report is based on evidence provided by the Catholic Diocese of Lismore and its representatives at the time of the assessment and, where applicable, any subsequent information the Diocese 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:



Julianna Demetrius

**Director, Demetrius Consulting**

*Accredited ACSL Auditor*

## 2. Audit findings

The audit indicated that the Catholic Diocese of Lismore has successfully implemented and embedded a culture of safeguarding that complies with the NCSS Standards.

Of the 104 NCSS Indicators, seven are not relevant to the Diocese's operations (1.3.2, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.3) and one (9.3.2) was not relevant because this was the Diocese's first NCSS audit.

Therefore, the Diocese was assessed against 96 of the 104 NCSS Indicators. Of these indicators, 85 (88.5%) were assessed as 'developed and embedded', 10 (10.4%) were assessed as 'developed' and 1 was assessed as 'developing'. None were assessed as 'yet to develop'.

**The audit found that the Diocese has fully implemented ('developed and embedded') 85 Indicators (88.5%), substantially implemented ('developed') 10 Indicators (10.4%) and is progressing ('developing') 1 indicator (1%) – see Table 1.**

**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>	17	1	14	2	–	–
<i>2: Children and adults are safe, informed and participate</i>	6	–	6	–	–	–
<i>3: Partnering with families, carers and communities</i>	6	–	6	–	–	–
<i>4: Equity is promoted, and diversity is respected</i>	4	–	4	–	–	–
<i>5: Robust human resource management</i>	22	6	14	1	1	–
<i>6: Effective complaints management</i>	19	–	19	–	–	–
<i>7: Ongoing education &amp; training</i>	11	–	9	2	–	–
<i>8: Safe physical and online environments</i>	7	–	5	2	–	–
<i>9: Continuous improvement</i>	6	1	3	2	–	–
<i>10: Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults</i>	6	–	5	1	–	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>–</b>

The key audit findings are summarised below. Although we assessed the Diocese's performance against every relevant indicator (as shown in Table 2), the commentary under each NCSS Standard below is not meant to exhaustively document this performance. Rather, it is intended to paint a broad picture of how the Standards are being implemented and highlight key themes and some examples of good practice identified by the audit.

## **General observations**

There is a genuine and tangible commitment to safeguarding in the Diocese. On his appointment to the Diocese in early 2017 – during the last year of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – the Bishop immediately filled the role of Safeguarding Manager established under the previous Bishop. The Bishop also designated responsibility for safeguarding across the Diocese to the then Vicar General, Rev. Paul Gooley. After he stepped away from the Vicar General role, the Bishop designated Rev. Paul Goley the Vicar for Safeguarding in recognition of his past leadership in this area and to maintain continuity. These appointments sent a strong message to the Diocese and its stakeholders about the priority of safeguarding.

As the Bishop's senior delegate, the Vicar for Safeguarding plays a pivotal leadership role in advocating for and modelling safeguarding practices, while the Safeguarding Manager has been instrumental to the Diocese meeting its responsibilities in relation to the handling of individual safeguarding matters. The more recent addition of the Safeguarding Education and Compliance Officer role has greatly assisted the Diocese to be able to undertake more proactive work, particularly in relation to supporting parishes, in the last two years. Evidence of safeguarding leadership is also demonstrated in individual parishes.

The Diocesan personnel we interviewed approached the audit with openness, acknowledging the importance of accountability and continuous improvement. Their candidness about opportunities to further strengthen their safeguarding credentials, and eagerness to receive feedback to support them with this work, is a notable strength. The Diocese has previously commissioned external experts to provide advice about safeguarding and recently took an important step forward, in re-establishing a Safeguarding Council (with external expert members) to provide an ongoing layer of accountability and transparency. The previous Safeguarding Council, which had been in operation between 2017 to 2021, included a number of well credentialed external experts however, an independent review in 2021 recommended that the representation be broadened to include survivor, legal and safeguarding expertise.

In support of its NCSS Self-Assessment and throughout the audit, the Diocese provided policies, procedures, templates, communication materials, training materials and other resources demonstrating its understanding of an engagement with the Standards. In addition, the various materials supplied to us by the parishes we visited provided tangible evidence that the Standards are observed at a local level.

The Diocese's standout area of safeguarding strength is its community-driven approach to ministry, connection and support led by the parishes. It delivers a vast number of inclusive services and initiatives – formal and less formal – that serve vulnerable people in the region (whether or not they are Catholic parishioners) with respect for their dignity and needs. In this way, the Diocese demonstrates

safeguarding and inclusion at a very practical level. The Diocese's strategic investment in nurturing youth ministry through the ongoing Diocesan Renewal process is another obvious strength.

The main area of challenge and opportunity for the Diocese is to strengthen its safeguarding governance structure to promote a more integrated approach to implementing the Bishop's strategic vision for safeguarding and to provide him with robust line of sight over safeguarding compliance. While it is clear that there is a very good safeguarding culture embedded across the Diocese, and that the ethos of the NCSS is being implemented, a more robust and transparent safeguarding governance structure will better position the Diocese to sustainably implement the NCSS – and to demonstrate continuing improvement – into the future.

## **2.1 NCSS Standard 1 – Committed leadership, governance, and culture**

*Safeguarding is a subset of the Gospel teaching. It's an important part of the teaching of love because it's where love has failed in the Church in the past – Bishop Homeming*

*The Bishop is good at allowing people to take things on. He's never pushed back on ideas or initiatives. He is also very patient in having the ability to walk alongside people on their journey – Rev Paul Gooley, Vicar for Safeguarding*

- The Diocese's Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Commitment Statement, originally endorsed in 2020, were both refreshed in 2024. Both are publicly available documents that are made available throughout the Diocese in a range of ways.
- While the Safeguarding Policy applies to both children and adults, there is scope to more strongly reflect the Diocese's commitment to safeguarding adults by organising the policy around the key competencies required under the NCSS Standards (rather than the Child Safe Standards as is currently the case). The Safeguarding Policy should also refer to the Diocese's Safeguarding Strategic Plan and Safeguarding Risk Management Framework (see below).
- The leadership of the Diocese is unequivocally committed to implementing and sustaining a strong safeguarding culture through the organisation. On his appointment to the role in 2017, Bishop Homeming immediately prioritised filling the Safeguarding Manager role established by the previous Bishop. He also allocated responsibility for safeguarding to the then Vicar General, Rev Paul Gooley, in recognition of his particular skills and leadership in this area. Rev Gooley has maintained the safeguarding leadership role in his current capacity as Vicar for Safeguarding after stepping away from the Vicar General role.
- The Vicar for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Manager, Julie Patston, both articulated their longstanding personal and professional commitment to safeguarding and spoke clearly to their responsibilities in relation to putting in place structures and practices to drive safeguarding.
- The Vicar for Safeguarding's concurrent role as parish priest of St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie, makes him well-placed to understand the challenges and opportunities that exist at the parish level. His positive role modelling was consistently spoken of during the audit; as one person put it, "There is barely a conversation with Fr Paul where you don't pick up that safeguarding is front of mind for him." The Safeguarding Manager is well known and regarded in the Diocese as the key point of contact 'for all things safeguarding'.

- The Safeguarding Manager, as the first incumbent, has established the Safeguarding Office and she and her role, particularly in relation to handling individual safeguarding matters, are well known across the Diocese.
- The Safeguarding Office is small, consisting of the Safeguarding Manager, an Education and Compliance Officers and a safeguarding officer (which was occupied but not actively filled at the time of the audit. Previously, two safeguarding officers also reported to the Safeguarding Manager, however these resources now sit within Lismore Catholic Schools, where the bulk of safeguarding matters originate (given the size of its workforce and contact with children and young people). Although the Safeguarding Office is small and has limited resources, positive feedback was received about the training and support it provides to parishes. The valuable contribution made by the Education and Compliance Officer, Christine Thompson, since commencing in 2023 was particularly noted as having boosted the Safeguarding Office's capacity to take on more proactive work.
- Safeguarding leadership is also apparent among parish teams through clergy, staff and volunteers who deliver ministries that meet the needs of children, young people and adults and who demonstrate strong competence in doing so safely. In particular, there is abundant evidence of parishes striving to actively reach out to and partner with local communities, recognising diversity and providing supports in inclusive ways.
- The Diocese also demonstrates safeguarding leadership beyond its own parameters, for example:
  - The Vicar for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Manager participate in the NSW/ACT Province Safeguarding Community of Practice. The Safeguarding Manager is on the CoP's Animation team.
  - The Safeguarding Manager has been invited to attend, and has been a member of working groups for, the International Safeguarding Conference in Rome. She also contributed to the development of child safe guidelines developed by the Office of the Children's Guardian for faith-based organisations.
  - The Manager Learning and Development (St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie) gave evidence to the NSW Parliament's Modern Slavery Committee hearing in June 2025 as part of its inquiry into modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales, sharing the parish's best practice model for employing aged-care workers on the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. In August she participated in an ACSL webinar about modern slavery.
- The Diocese demonstrates a genuine openness to external input to and feedback about its safeguarding approach. For example, in 2021 it commissioned an external review of its safeguarding governance model and operational structure by former NSW Deputy Ombudsman, Steve Kinmond. A key recommendation of that review was to re-establish a differently comprised Safeguarding Council, which the Diocese has recently implemented. The Diocese is to be commended for appointing well-credentialed external members and a person with lived experience of church abuse to the Council.
- The newly constituted Safeguarding Council will provide an important ongoing mechanism of accountability, transparency and continuous improvement. The Diocese is encouraged to

ensure that it leverages the panel's expertise to proactively inform its work, having regard to the current priorities for the next four years as outlined in the Safeguarding Strategic Plan. The Council's Terms of Reference should be amended to formalise the Bishop's intention (per advice received during the audit) to meet with the Council annually and specify the nature of key (deidentified) safeguarding data that will be reported to the Council to assist it to fulfil its role.

- The recent development of a Safeguarding Office Charter is a positive step towards formally documenting the Diocese's safeguarding governance structure. It is the auditor's view (noting that the 2021 review made related recommendations) that the robustness and transparency of the Diocesan safeguarding governance structure should be enhanced and documented in the Charter. In particular, it is recommended that:
  - The Diocese should formally identify and document the senior roles across the entities of the Diocese that have key safeguarding responsibilities (that is, those to whom the responsibility for safeguarding is delegated by the Bishop) as comprising the 'Diocesan Safeguarding Executive', and their safeguarding accountabilities to the Bishop.
  - The Safeguarding Executive should formally meet, at a regular interval, with the Vicar for Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Manager, for the purpose of discussing critical safeguarding and serious professional misconduct issues, and report to the Bishop (through the Safeguarding Vicar and Safeguarding Manager) against agreed safeguarding data and compliance indicators which should also be documented.
  - To provide strategic line of sight over operational safeguarding data, the Safeguarding Executive should be formally required to notify the Safeguarding Manager, as soon as practicable, of serious abuse or misconduct involving children or vulnerable adults, including reportable allegations and incidents involving sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and serious neglect, being handled by entities of the Diocese.
  - The Safeguarding Manager should be required to formally report to the Vicar for Safeguarding and maintain a register of all civil claims (including National Redress Scheme applications), reportable conduct notifications and serious abuse or misconduct matters being handled by the safeguarding Office or other entities of the Diocese, which will be reported on to the Bishop (via the Vicar for Safeguarding).
- The Diocese has a comprehensive Code of Conduct which was recently reviewed to ensure it aligns with the requirements of Standard 1. The Code is provided to all staff and volunteers, and its requirements are covered in safeguarding training.
- The Diocese is currently reviewing its overarching Risk Management Framework which will reflect, at an appropriately high level, that there are mechanisms in place to prevent, identify, and mitigate safeguarding risks to children and adults. These mechanisms are currently reflected across existing safeguarding policies, procedures and resources.
- At a parish level, the need to risk assess activities from a safeguarding perspective is well understood. The parishes we visited had either completed or were in the process of completing risk assessments using templates developed by the Safeguarding Office. The Diocese has recently developed a Safeguarding Risk Management Framework to support parishes to identify and mitigate risks and document risk management strategies for common activity types. The

Diocese should formally clarify in the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework that it is the responsibility of parish priests to approve and sign risk assessments.

- The Safeguarding Risk Management Framework in its current form is a useful document, but the Diocese should expand it so that it serves as an overarching document (linked to the Diocese's overarching Risk Management Framework and key safeguarding policies) which documents the main strategies (beyond risk assessing activities) employed by the Diocese to prevent, identify and mitigate safeguarding risks to children and adults; for example:
  - Recruiting and supporting appropriate people
  - Creating and maintaining safe environments
  - Handling safeguarding concerns and complaints
  - Keeping records and sharing information
  - Continuous improvement measures
- The Safeguarding Information and Record Keeping Policy supports personnel to understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping for safeguarding and professional standards. This is also addressed in the Code of Conduct and via safeguarding training.

### ***The Diocesan Renewal project***

*The Diocesan Renewal is an ongoing process initiated by Bishop Homeming and facilitated by the Pastoral Projects Leader. It comprises of priority area working groups – composed of laity and clergy – recommending informed proposals to the Deaneries, Council of Priests and Bishop.*

*Several priority areas support the objectives articulated in Standards 2 and 3 of the NCSS. For example, a decision has been made to reconvene the Diocesan Pastoral Council from 2026 to provide a consultative body bringing together clergy, religious and laity, reporting to the Bishop. The Council will provide an important opportunity for lay community members in particular, with diverse representation encouraged, to have input into pastoral priorities, including safeguarding.*

*Another priority identified by the Renewal project is strengthening effective ministry with young people in local communities. Parish youth coordinators are meeting on a monthly basis, led by the Diocesan Youth Director, who was appointed in March 2024. To identify and plan priorities, they reviewed what is working well in parishes where youth involvement and participation is flourishing as well as parishes struggling in this area and are now implementing learnings.*

In the past four years, communities within the Diocese - notably Tweed Heads, Ballina, Casino, Woodburn, Grafton, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Laurieton and Lismore - have experienced significant upheaval and trauma due to catastrophic floods. These events have created new risks for some people – such as unsafe housing, employment loss and mental distress – and intensified existing risks for people who were already vulnerable to harm.

The Diocese, at all levels, has demonstrated critical leadership in response. The Bishop has driven a substantial fundraising effort, with funds raised by the Diocese of Lismore Flood Appeal donated to a range of community organisations. Parishes have operated as local hubs of support for their communities. For example:

### ***Providing practical support to communities***

*Port Macquarie parish convened a dedicated flood recovery team which was immediately deployed to knock on the doors of people in the flooded Hastings River areas. The parish's Youth and Community Hub has been supplied clothes, baby items, and personal necessities to those in need. Volunteers have delivered food, hygiene supplies, and other essentials to local recovery centres. Parish staff have also actively aligned their recovery efforts with local council strategies.*

*• Macleay Valley parish collected and provided pillows, blankets, linen and baby formula to support those at the evacuation centre. Kempsey farmers were affected by rising waters, and to assist them the parish coordinated hay for livestock through a local transport company. The parish has also worked closely with the Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre to support those facing food insecurity and isolation and has made St Patrick's Church in Smithtown available for the local Vinnies to use.*

These and other local efforts have made a very tangible contribution to safeguarding children and adults from harm and more broadly, send a strong message that the church is a place where people are seen, valued and cared for.

### ***Designated Safeguarding Contact Officer***

*Macleay Valley parish was unique among those we visited for having a designated safeguarding contact officer whose role is clearly documented in a standalone ministry handbook. This voluntary role is performed by a parishioner who is a former school principal and also a member of the Parish Financial Council. The value of a designated safeguarding contact officer is that it provides parishioners with an alternate local point of contact if they don't feel comfortable approaching the parish priest or Safeguarding Office.*

## **2.2 NCSS Standard 2 – Children and adults are safe, informed and participate**

*"How would people know this is a safe church? It's in the attitude of our parish priest. He's always welcoming, interested in people, and talking to people. He encourages us all to recognise and welcome new people. Hospitality is very important in our parish; there is always someone at the door to welcome people and everyone receives a parish welcome pack. People keep an eye out to make sure new people are settling in ok. Homilies always emphasise love and respect and coming together, and there is always a safeguarding message in the newsletter and on screen at mass –  
Parish Secretary, St Anthony's Kingscliff*

- The Diocese uses a range of methods to inform children and adults about their right to be safe and safeguarding measures, for example:
  - the Safeguarding Commitment Statement, Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct are well publicised. The Diocese is keen to create a child friendly adaptation of the Code which can be distributed to children who participate in parish activities
  - the Diocese's Safeguarding Newsletter, safeguarding policies, resources and links to support services, e.g. Beyond Blue, Interrelate, Kids Helpline, Blue Knot, 1800 RESPECT, Link Up, are published on the Diocesan website
  - parishes premises display banners, posters and brochures promoting safeguarding and relevant support services for children and adults
  - parish bulletins communicate messages about safeguarding and contact details for the Safeguarding Office
  - information packs containing safeguarding information are provided in some parishes (e.g. Coffs Harbour) for parents of children participating in activities – all parishes should be encouraged to do this
  - the 'Rights and Responsibility' card for children, originally developed by the Archdiocese of Sydney, has been adapted for use in the Diocese
  - National Child Protection Week and Safeguarding Sunday are celebrated by parishes
- As part of the Diocesan Renewal, the Diocese re-launched its *Catholic Life* magazine in 2024. The magazine is an attractive and inviting publication sharing a variety of stories from across the parish, including profiles of laity and clergy, and including a regular crossword puzzle and colouring in page. The magazine is distributed to all parishes and is also available on the Diocese's website. A regular 'safeguarding' page or column in the magazine would be a valuable addition to share information about safeguarding rights, policies, resources and activities.
- Information about the NCSS and Child Safe Standards and the Diocese's safeguarding policies is published on the safeguarding page of the Diocese's website, together with a regular Safeguarding Newsletter. The page also includes links to other safeguarding organisations and support services. At the time of the audit, the Diocese was finalising an upgrade to modernise its website and make it more accessible. When live, it will also feature a recording of a safeguarding video by Bishop Homeming and other multi-media content.
- Most engagement with children unsurprisingly takes place at the parish level (early childhood, schools and church). The demography of individual parishes differ - some have large numbers of young families while others have predominantly older parishioners – meaning that there are more or less opportunities for children's ministry in different locations. Resource capacity (including the availability of suitable volunteers) is also a factor that influences this.
- Some but not all parishes run dedicated youth/family masses, children's liturgy, and youth groups. All parishes should be strongly encouraged to offer children's liturgy, as this is one of the simplest ways to create a family friendly environment and provide an opportunity for young children to participate. Coffs Harbour parish has developed very good resources to assist with the safe operation of children's liturgy (guidelines and duty statement), which could be shared with other parishes.

- Youth groups in parishes large enough for them to be viable are one of the main ways the Diocese encourages older young people to participate, develop positive peer connections, and have a say in decisions that affect them. The Diocese's investment in this area of ministry is via the Renewal project, and the positive work done by Parish Youth Coordinators, is welcome and commendable (see the profile below).
- Putting to one side the issues of demography and capacity, the appetite for children's ministry, and for engaging with children more generally, also differs between parishes (as is the case in other dioceses). The Diocesan leadership is aware that one of the main reasons for this is that some clergy are fearful and wish to eliminate - rather than appropriately manage – safeguarding risks, which leads to minimal contact with children and young people. The Diocese should continue to stress with clergy that proactive engagement with children and young people, and employing appropriate risk management strategies when doing so, is aligned with the ethos of the NCSS. While the Diocese already provides guidance about risk management, there is an opportunity for clergy who are more confident engaging with children and young people to informally mentor those who are less so by explaining how they engage in a positive and transparent manner with children.
- One of the most notable features of the Diocese of Lismore is the extent to which it directly engages adults at risk through the significant number of formal and less formal aged care and community services, including outreach initiatives, operated in parishes. These services both provide formal safeguards to people who need them and offer natural safeguarding opportunities to promote social connection, communicate with adults about their right to be safe, and encourage them to participate in decisions that affect them. This is a real strength of the Diocese's performance against the NCSS.
- The Diocese promotes information about abuse prevention programs and related support services in a variety of ways, including on its website, in its Safeguarding Newsletters, and via parish communications (such as foyer materials and bulletins).
- At a parish level, parent consent for children's participation in activities is obtained, and parents are provided with information about how risks are managed. Parents are actively encouraged to supervise their children and to attend activities.

### ***Investing in engaging with young people***

*The Diocese has made a significant investment in resources to drive the engagement and participation of young people. It has a designated Youth Director (who is also Parish Administrator at Sawtell) to oversee the provision of spiritual direction and pastoral care to young people in the Diocese, a Team Leader to oversee all youth ministry activities (this role was being recruited to during the audit), and a Youth Evangelisation Coordinator (who focuses on ministry with young adults).*

*There are dedicated Parish Youth Coordinators in the large parishes of Ballina, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour. Under the direction of parish priests, they (and pastoral associates in some other parishes) organise and deliver youth ministry activities in parishes. As the Diocesan Youth Ministry*

*Team (which has their own vibrant website), they began regularly meeting at the start of 2025 to collaborate on best practice and coordinate cross Diocesan initiatives. Some of the many youth ministry initiatives we noted during the audit include:*

*Neotes, a St Francis Xavier Ballina parish magazine “by the youth, for the youth” featuring profiles, stories, news and events. Each issue of the magazine, which is edited by the Parish Youth Coordinator, includes the Diocese’s Safeguarding Commitment Statement, Child Safe Standards and information about support services. Ballina’s youth ministry also has its own Instagram account to promote youth focused news and events.*

*In Coff Harbour, a tailored Code of Conduct for youth group leaders (linked to the Diocesan Code of Conduct) has been developed together with youth group social media policy. Youth group leaders meet regularly, and safeguarding is a standing agenda item. Youth group leaders are supported by weekly schedules which address safeguarding considerations. Young people who participate must also sign a participant Code of Conduct. Youth group leaders have access to an organised folder which includes all the resources they need to keep participants safe. The Parish Youth Coordinator also sends a fortnightly newsletter to parents. In Port Macquarie, this year the Parish Youth Coordinator led 22 young pilgrims on a Pentecost Sunday Walk from Bonny Hills to Port Macquarie. The walk included stops at St Mary Star of the Sea and St Francis of Assisi before a concluding Mass at St Agnes Church. Along the way, pilgrims prayed the Rosary, shared their hopes with each other, and made a timber crucifix. In August this year, the Diocese’s annual SHINE Youth Gathering was held in Coffs Harbour, providing an opportunity for high school students from across the Diocese to gather together with youth ministry leaders to experience dynamic faith formation. The Diocese is also sponsoring several young people to attend the Ignite Conference, a national Catholic youth ministry event in September. The Diocese’s engagement with young people is also supported by College Youth Ministers who work in Catholic schools to support youth ministry and religious education. In March this year, high school students from across the Diocese had the opportunity to attend the annual LEAD Student Discipleship Gathering in Grafton, facilitated by Mission Services within Lismore Catholic Schools in collaboration with College Youth Ministers.*

A challenge for the Diocese is to consider how smaller parishes that don’t have a Youth Parish Coordinator can also be supported to provide youth ministry. We understand the Diocesan Renewal working group on youth ministry is considering this.

### **2.3 NCSS Standard 3 – Partnering with families, carers and communities**

*“Safeguarding is also about church looking outward. It ultimately comes down to the parish priest and if they look outwards – our priest empowers the congregation in this area and gives them license to move beyond the church and be outward looking, and this encourages others to be outward focused as well, and to have a broad concept of “church”–*

*Mick Eller, Safeguarding Contact, Macleay Valley parish*

- The Safeguarding Policy communicates the Diocese’s approach to safeguarding. In addition, all the parishes we visited had safeguarding resources prominently displayed, including information about who to contact about questions or concerns. We also viewed examples of parish bulletins containing this information.
- The Diocese’s Safeguarding Newsletter is also available on its website and disseminated to parishes. Among other things it is used to communicate updates and seek feedback about new policies, and publicise a range of activities, e.g. National Child Protection Week and NAIDOC Week.
- The Safeguarding Office has indicated that next year, it will continue to provide parishes with guidance and resources to assist them to acknowledge and celebrate Child Protection Week with more consistency across the Diocese. Beyond Child Protection Week, other opportunities for promoting consistent safeguarding messages across the Diocese include Safeguarding Sunday, International Day of People with Disability, National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day, and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.
- It is a matter for each parish to identify opportunities (having regard to their areas of ministry and services) that provide families, carers and community members with opportunities to participate in safeguarding decisions and practices. As parishes differ, a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not appropriate and in the auditors’ experience, rather than trying to establish standalone ‘consultation mechanisms’, it is most effective to provide these opportunities more organically. For example:
  - Volunteers who lead ministry activities (including playgroups, children’s liturgy, youth groups, Sacramental activities, men’s and women’s social and support groups, outreach services for adults) can use formal (e.g. newsletters, surveys) and informal methods (chatting before or after activities, suggestion boxes) to engage with families and communities about their experiences, views and questions relating to safeguarding.
  - Holding a regular morning tea after mass is a simple and practical way of providing an opportunity for connection and feedback.
  - Safeguarding messages and invitations to ask questions or provide feedback can be communicated via homilies, bulletins and websites.

The Diocese should encourage each parish, as part of their annual safeguarding continuous improvement assessment, to identify local opportunities to partner with families, carers and communities to promote safeguarding.

***Letter to families about safeguarding commitment***

*Dear Families,*

*Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your precious children. At St. Augustine’s Catholic Church, as part of the Catholic Diocese of Lismore, our parish is deeply committed to creating and maintaining environments that are safe, supportive, and nurturing for all children, young people, and vulnerable adults. In line with the guidance of Bishop Gregory Homeming, we strive to build a*

*strong culture of safety and care within all our programs and ministries. We uphold the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. These standards are embedded in law and regulated by the Office of the Children's Guardian. Our Parish and Diocese have zero tolerance for abuse or exploitation. Together, we work to prevent all forms of abuse, physical, sexual, or emotional, ensuring the dignity and wellbeing of every person in our care. It is by working together, with families, parishioners, schools, and the wider community, we continue to build a Church where every child feels safe, valued, and genuinely supported to thrive.*

*Welcome handout provided to parishioners at St Francis Xavier Church in Woolgoolga. The handout includes a colouring activity for children inviting them to draw themselves with a trusted adult.*

### ***Parish pantry and lunches***

*Tweed Heads parish supports vulnerable people in need through the volunteer run Parish Pantry and Lunch with Friends initiatives. The Parish Pantry provides non-perishable food to anyone in need, four days a week. It also provides food packages to people living in government-funded assisted accommodation. The pantry is sustained by donations from local parishioners. Lunch with Friends has been running for almost 20 years. Originally providing meals for homeless people in local parks, it later partnered with a St Vincent de Paul drop-in centre that offers meals, showers and laundry services for vulnerable people. Once a week, parish volunteers supply the drop-in centre with lunches for these people.*

### ***Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion***

*Since August 2023, with the support of parish priest Fr Peter Padsungay, two long term members and volunteers of St Francis Xavier Ballina, Michael and Rita Vella, have brought Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion to residents at Crowley Care who are unable to attend regular mass. Liturgy is held in the chapel and Communion is taken room to room to residents unable to attend. Residents often talk "It's about making people feel part of our parish community, that they matter", says Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, Michael Vella.*

### ***Ballina Men's group***

*In Ballina parish, the men's group meets fortnightly to provide mutual support. The gatherings include predominantly retired men, but all men who may need support or a listening ear are welcomed to the group, which is coordinated by a local parishioner and member of the parish council who is also a mental health coach. They provide a safe environment for conversations, helping men explore what's on their minds without the fear of judgment. A key part of the gatherings is prayer, with each man holding the challenges of others in their thoughts. Macleay Valley parish also runs a men's prayer and social group which brings men together for adoration in the chapel and coffee afterwards.*

## **2.4 NCSS Standard 4 – Equity is promoted, and diversity is respected**

*St Agnes' Catholic Parish acknowledges the Birpai people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work, and serve. We acknowledge their deep connection to this land — its waters, skies, and stories — nurtured with wisdom, care, and resilience for countless generations.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And as an organisation committed to care and service, St Agnes' is dedicated to walking alongside First Nations peoples — listening, learning, and building genuine relationships grounded in respect and understanding –*

*St Agnes Port Macquarie parish website*

- The Diocese's Safeguarding Policy articulates awareness of the diverse circumstances and experiences that increase the risk of abuse. Safeguarding training materials also promote this awareness.
- The Complaints Handling Policy and supporting procedures acknowledge barriers to reporting abuse. Safeguarding training aims to equip personnel to recognise and navigate barriers that may prevent people from speaking up about abuse. The Diocese provides multiple avenues for making a complaint and also promotes external organisations that can assist people who have experienced abuse.
- The Diocesan leadership's vision is for parishes to be places of inclusion without discrimination by practicing a welcoming approach. The Diocese is served by having culturally diverse clergy, which sends a strong message about the Church being a place where people from a variety of backgrounds are valued and welcomed.
- Bishop Homeming livestreams a weekly mass – described as Australia's most popular online Catholic mass – meeting the needs of Diocesan parishioners and others in the broader community who can't attend in person.
- The Safeguarding Commitment Statement acknowledges the abuse experienced by some people at the hands of the Church, and the Safeguarding Framework (handbook for parishes) also includes an acknowledgement of survivors. Survivors are also acknowledged in safeguarding training, and we understand the Diocese plans to include an acknowledgement on

its new website. There is an opportunity for individual parishes in the Diocese to further explore ways to acknowledge survivors of abuse that are best suited to their local circumstances.

### **Macleay Valley parish community work**

*"May we continue to be enriched by our diversity and the land in which we live.  
May we grow in unity and may all who come here find a welcoming home"*

*– Macleay Valley parish prayer*

*Macleay Valley parish has a significant Aboriginal community. A tapestry celebrating the Dughutti Nation hangs in the Kempsey Church, and the NAPCAN Deep Listening poster is displayed at the two main Mass centres. The parish seeks to serve the community in a variety of ways. The parish priest has good connections with local Elders and personalises baptisms and funerals for Aboriginal people according to Aboriginal Catholic guidelines (as does the parish priest at Port Macquarie). Indigenous liturgies include Welcome to Country, Water Blessing and Smoking Ceremony.*

*Sacramental Program preparation has been adapted for Aboriginal children when required. The parish runs a fortnightly soup kitchen which is well attended, regularly donates to the local neighbourhood centre which serves the community, and offers the hall to the community free of charge for gatherings. The parish priest also volunteers weekly at the local PCYC which many local Aboriginal young people attend. National Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is celebrated.*

*The parish also celebrates cultural diversity more broadly, celebrating Refugee and Migrant Sunday, Social Justice Sunday, World Day of Care for Creation and Children's Week via the parish newsletter, Prayers of the Faithful and Homily, and resources shared at Mass. Feasts important to various migrant communities who have made the Macleay Valley home are celebrated and promoted, e.g. Pentecost Sunday, St Joseph's Feast Day, St Alphonsa Feast Day and/or Onam Festiva. The parish has a number of Filipino parishioners and displays relics and saints that are relevant to the Filipino community.*

### **Coffs Harbour community events**

*Coffs Harbour parish runs a well-attended multicultural day with parishioners and the broader community invited to come in their traditional/cultural dress, bring a plate of food to share, and join in with games, dancing and sport – including the opportunity to bowl out the parish priest! The parish also hosts a monthly 'sit down' community luncheon which is open to all members of the community, whether or not they are parishioners. The lunch is well publicised and attracts about 70 people. Children and young people from the local schools are also invited, providing a positive opportunity for intergenerational engagement.*

### **Improving accessibility for older people at St Augustine's**

*The parish is funding the installation of a ramp at the St Augustine's Church entrance so that the church is accessible to people who can't use stairs. While it is a considerable expense, the parish wants to make it as easy as possible for people, including older people and those with physical disability, to continue to come to church and feel welcome. Through the parish pastoral council, it is also prioritising assistance for older people who need assistance to learn or improve their English language skills. The parish has published a safeguarding flyer in Burmese and plans to publish versions in Filipino and Indian to meet the needs of the parish community.*

### **Prison chaplaincy**

*The Mid North Coast Correctional Centre is a minimum to maximum security hub for male and female inmates, based 14 kilometres west of Kempsey. Macleay Valley Parish priest, Fr James Foster, who's a prison chaplain at the Centre, sees it as an important work of the Parish and Diocese, as it serves inmates, staff and their families. "It's a very privileged ministry," Fr James says. "You are coming across people who are broken, lost, and haven't had a chance in life." Fr James says that the ministry extends beyond offering a listening ear; chaplains provide pastoral care as well as spiritual guidance, helping prisoners find solace in Jesus's closeness to them, whether by offering prayers or simply being present. "We're living Christ's mission, as Jesus went to the people on the margins. There isn't always interest in the broader society about helping those in prison, but they are still God's children," he says.*

### **St Agnes' Youth and Community Hub**

*The St Agnes' Youth and Community Hub in Port Macquarie is a safe, welcoming space where people can access practical support and essential services in one place, including food, showers, laundry, clothing, and mental health support. The space is also used regularly by a variety of community groups such as 'People Builders' youth group, Zumba fitness, the Filipino community, Hastings Youth Network, school groups and other service providers such as Family Support Services Parents and Playgroup. Every Friday night during the school term, high school students also gather at the Youth & Community Hub for food, fellowship, fun, and formation.*

## **2.5 NCSS Standard 5 – Robust human resource management**

- The Diocese's requirements in relation to probity checking are outlined in the Working with Children Check Policy and National Police Check Policy which were both recently updated. The

policies specify the types of roles for which checks are required and who is responsible for administering them. Screening responsibilities are shared by Chancery, the HR team in other Diocesan agencies, and parishes. The National Police Check policy requires a risk assessment to be carried out when a check returns a disclosable outcome.

- We reviewed several examples of position descriptions outlining safeguarding expectations. The Diocese's Recruitment Policy requires interviews and referee checks. The Diocese has developed sample questions for both processes, which we understand are used in practice. The Recruitment Policy should be amended to clearly reflect that position descriptions and recruitment advertisements must communicate safeguarding expectations, and that interview questions and reference checks for roles that involve direct contact with children and/or adults at risk must include safeguarding questions (we understand that both occur in practice). The sample questions can be appended (along with other relevant risk management resources) to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework.
- The Diocese provides guidelines and templates to parishes to support them to safely engage volunteers. These include checklists for engagement, reference checking and induction as well as fact sheets about behaviours to encourage and discourage. A volunteer engagement letter template clearly outlines role dimensions and safeguarding requirements. One parish we visited – Macleay Valley – has developed its own set of particularly comprehensive Ministry handbooks, which include clear safeguarding messages, to support its volunteers.

#### ***Parish probity record-keeping systems***

*Our parish visits and inspections of records indicated compliance with screening requirements for staff and volunteers at parish level (clergy are screened by Chancery), including verifying and renewing WWCCs. Some parishes we visited had more efficient ways of recording this information than others, but all had a system. For example, Coffs Harbour parish has a well organised and maintained Compliance Register in the form of an Excel spreadsheet which for all clergy, staff and volunteers lists WWCC information (clearance number, verification, and expiry date), National Police Check information (number and expiry date) and the date that the Code of Conduct was signed. This system was shared with Coffs Harbour by Sawtell parish who originally developed it, and is a good practice model that the Safeguarding Office should encourage other parishes to adopt.*

- We also inspected Chancery records which indicated compliance with probity checking requirements.
- We were advised that the Chancery has a Human Resource Management System, Aurion, which records screening information for Chancery staff. Port Macquarie, as the parish delivering the most comprehensive suite of services, also has its own Human Resource Management System for parish personnel as well as personnel employed by its aged care and other services. At a parish level, parish secretaries are recording screening information, usually on spreadsheets.

- Because the Chancery's Manager of People and Culture is without a dedicated team, it would not be feasible for all screening information from across the Diocese to be centrally recorded by that role. However, the Diocese should identify the best way of facilitating centralised monitoring of and reporting on compliance with worker screening requirements across the Diocese. We are not suggesting that the requirements are not being implemented, however there is currently no reporting mechanism in place for the Bishop to be satisfied of this. One option would be to progressively require parishes to use Aurion to record their screening information, so that the Manager, People and Culture could run compliance reports on Chancery and parish screening (we understand Aurion provides a reporting capability but that it is not currently enabled). Port Macquarie could also be required to regularly report on screening compliance to the Bishop given they use a different system to record their screening information.
- All clergy and paid workers in the Diocese must undertake safeguarding awareness training. Additionally, all paid or voluntary Diocesan workers required to hold a WWCC must undertake training modules about mandatory reporting and reportable conduct. All clergy and workers are required to sign the Code of Conduct with a copy placed on their file. The Diocese's leadership team previously attended training sessions on the NCSS in 2018 and are registered to attend the updated training session in September 2025.
- Induction and supervision is provided for all roles and emphasises safeguarding responsibilities. Mentoring or 'buddying' is implemented for personnel where appropriate. Professional supervision and wellbeing support is provided for personnel in key roles, including those who manage complaints. A probationary period is in place for new employees and volunteers to allow time to assess their suitability.
- The Diocese does not have a consistent approach to annual performance appraisals across all agencies/services however managers are expected to have continuous conversations about performance, development and training which include a focus on safeguarding. This includes safeguarding being a standing agenda item for staff meetings.
- Clergy attend a compulsory annual conference and have access to professional/pastoral supervision that aligns with NCSS requirements. It is recommended that the Diocese develops a Pastoral Supervision for Clergy Framework to document these requirements and how compliance is monitored and reported. It is also recommended that the Diocese considers progressively introducing performance appraisals for clergy. The Diocese has a Personal and Professional Development of the Clergy Policy, Procedure and Classification Table which outline the requirements for clergy. These documents refer to the professional/pastoral supervision indicators in NCSS edition 1. They should be updated to reflect the requirements in NCSS edition 2.
- We were unable to confirm that all clergy are completing the minimum annual professional/supervision required (5.5.4) or are undertaking regular appraisals (5.5.5). We recommend that the Bishop delegates responsibility for ensuring compliance with these requirements to an appropriate appointee, such as the Vicar General.

- The Diocese has not had any newly ordained clergy since 2018. However, induction and mentoring are offered to priests who have transferred into the Diocese and the Diocese would extend this to any newly ordained or professed clergy if needed, compliance with indicator 5.5.6.
- Parishes record the details of visiting clergy. The Chancery maintains electronic and hard copy records of all visiting clergy and verification of their credentials (including ACMR numbers and WWCCs). We recommend the Diocese consider partnering with Parramatta Diocese to utilise their electronic Ministry app for recording visiting clergy.
- International clergy and religious are required to obtain a police clearance from any country they have resided in for a period of 12 months or more within the previous 10 years. They must also submit a character testimonial from their superior, which forms part of their visa application. Additionally, the Bishop directly verifies and documents the individual's credentials on their personnel file.
- International clergy and religious are required to participate in safeguarding awareness, mandatory reporting and reportable conduct training, and training about Integrity in Our Common Mission, prior to commencing ministry. They are also provided with a mentor. Designing a protocol and processes for inducting clergy who are new to the Diocese has been priority of the Diocesan Renewal and we viewed internal guidelines that have been developed.

## **2.6 NCSS Standard 6 – Effective complaints management**

- The Diocese has Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct policies, both of which were reviewed in 2024 and address the relevant requirements and responsibilities. The Reportable Conduct policy should now be updated to reflect the recent changes to the Children's Guardian Act relating to procedural fairness and disclosure of reportable conduct information.
- The Diocese has a current overarching Complaint Handling Policy which was being updated at the time of the audit. The policy provides relevant commentary about complaint handling principles and processes. It refers to a Complaint Investigation Procedure (yet to be developed). As it is intended to be a public document, the Complaint Handling Policy would benefit from refinement to appropriately signpost:
  - the different types of complaints that may be received (including levels of complaint)
  - the key personnel with responsibility for managing complaints and deciding the outcome of complaints
  - external reporting/notification responsibilities (i.e. police, mandatory reporting, reportable conduct) and cross reference to the related policies
  - how the people involved in a complaint will be supported
  - dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct
  - available review options
  - complaint record keeping requirements
- Much of the above information is currently included in the Diocese's draft Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines which are intended as an internal document to support the implementation of the policy. It is positive that the Diocese has sought to streamline and consolidate a number of existing protocols, factsheets and flowcharts so that guidance is clearer and easier to navigate. We recommend relocating the above information to the policy

and focusing the guidelines on procedural guidance for handling safeguarding complaints, referring back to the policy as appropriate.

- The Diocese has developed draft Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines to support the policy (a draft was provided). While the Diocese already has a number of protocols, factsheets and flowcharts to support complaint handling, the aim of the Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines is to streamline and consolidate these so that guidance is easier to navigate and provides better clarity about how different types of complaints will be escalated, risk assessed, managed and responded to by the Diocese, and associated responsibilities.
- Once the Complaint Handling Policy and Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines have been further refined, they should be provided to the Safeguarding Council for endorsement. Guidance about complaint handling responsibilities is incorporated within safeguarding training and induction materials and other resources.
- All parish staff we met with demonstrated a clear understanding of how to identify a safeguarding complaint or concern and how to appropriately respond.
- The Safeguarding Office manages civil claims and National Redress Scheme applications and allegations that meet the definition of reportable conduct. Safeguarding concerns/complaints that do not meet the threshold of reportable conduct are managed by the relevant Diocesan entity (e.g. Chancery, schools, early childhood, aged care). If they involve Code of Conduct breaches, they are referred to the Safeguarding Office (clergy) or Manager, People and Culture (other personnel).
- The Diocese has adopted an approach where any serious allegations involving clergy are investigated by a suitably credentialed external investigator with significant experience in handling safeguarding investigations. We were advised that disability and aged care reportable incidents are handled by the relevant Diocesan entity and in Port Macquarie, the overall response to incident management is overseen by the parish's Quality, Compliance and Risk Committee. Complaints are reviewed by the Committee during monthly meetings, to ensure that matters are managed and responded to appropriately, including meeting any internal or external mandatory reporting requirements which could include the Safeguarding Office or regulatory bodies such as the Aged Care Commission, NDIS Commission or Department of Communities and Justice.
- While Standard 6 focuses on effective complaint management systems, it is important to acknowledge that in the disability/aged care context, safeguarding concerns often arise via incidents rather than 'complaints'. At present, the Bishop does not have line of sight over these matters via regular reporting to him about the number and type of incidents and outcomes. The Diocese consider to the best way of rectifying this, having regard to the audit's broader recommendations about strengthening safeguarding governance, so that the Bishop can be satisfied about this aspect of Diocesan safeguarding practice.
- The Diocese's safeguarding webpage has a prominent 'Make a report' tab which links to options to report to the Safeguarding Office and/or external entities including the Child Protection Helpline, Ageing and Disability Abuse Helpline and e-Safety Commissioner. The webpage also features information should be reviewed to ensure links to back to the Diocese's online

reporting option. The Diocese also makes a hard copy concern/complaint form readily available in Diocesan premises. Parish bulletins invite people to contact the Safeguarding Office if they have any concerns.

- The National Response Protocol is followed in relation to any substantiated complaints of sexual abuse against clergy or religious. The Diocese is also committed to following the National Response Protocol in relation to facilitating care for those who have experienced or been affected by child sexual abuse. Therapeutic services that are offered are based on best practice and trauma informed approaches.
- The Safeguarding Information and Record Keeping Policy outlines the systems and protocols in place to ensure all abuse complaints, incidents, allegations, disclosures, concerns and referrals are recorded in online databases and physical file locations and stored, protected and retained according to the Privacy Act. Information is shared in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and other relevant legislation including Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

## **2.7 NCSS Standard 7 – Ongoing education and training**

- The Diocesan Safeguarding Education and Training Policy, reviewed in January 2025, sets out the compulsory safeguarding training requirements for clergy, Chancery workers, and parish employees and volunteers. The Safeguarding Office maintains a safeguarding training register. We viewed very positive evaluations of training sessions in 2024.
- Clergy must attend an annual training module. In previous years training has covered elder abuse and the national code of conduct for the Catholic Church, *Integrity in Our Common Mission*. The clergy training in 2025 will include a focus on domestic violence. In addition, new parish priests/administrators are required to complete refresher safeguarding training. New priests from overseas also complete the NATSICC course, Cross-cultural competency in a Catholic context.
- All Chancery and parish workers are initially required to complete safeguarding awareness training, and additional training about mandatory reporting and reportable conduct must be completed by those who are required to hold a WWCC or police check. Those engaged in a child related role also receive a safeguarding information pack when they are inducted.
- Safeguarding training is delivered by the Safeguarding Office except for in Port Macquarie parish, which employs its own Learning and Development Manager. She delivers face to face safeguarding training every month which is also open to staff and volunteers in nearby parishes. The training delivered has been very well received.
- In 2024, the Safeguarding Office reviewed and updated its safeguarding training, which we reviewed, to ensure they reflect the requirements of the NCSS, including a focus on factors that place children and adults at risk and record keeping requirements. This year, training has incorporated information about revisions to recently revised safeguarding policies. The Diocese also regularly takes advantage of training opportunities provided by the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- In addition to completing safeguarding training, Parish secretaries attend an annual conference which provides an additional opportunity for professional development in relation to

safeguarding. We reviewed the sessions on safeguarding that were delivered at the 2023 and 2024 conferences. Given the critical role that parish secretaries play at a local level this is an important initiative.

- The regular Safeguarding Newsletter provides a less formal but valuable education mechanism across the Diocese. As well, information is shared on the Diocesan's safeguarding webpage about relevant training provided by other organisations, including the Office of the Children's Guardian, e-safety Commission, NAPCAN, Ageing and Disability Commission, Compass and Older Person's Advocacy Network.
- Safeguarding Office staff have access to and participate in relevant professional development opportunities, including the International Safeguarding Conference (online) and ACSL seminars.
- The Safeguarding Office has provided resources to support parishes to observe NAIDOC week and promote the 13 YARN service. It has identified that it would like to develop training materials on advocating for older people, and to work with individual parishes to develop tailored training to meet the needs of their communities, having regard to their cultural diversity. For example, Coffs Harbour Parish, which has a significant community originating from Myanmar, has expressed an interest in this.
- Training and education provided about the online environment are consistent with the Safeguarding Children Young People and Adults at Risk Policy, Code of Conduct and Acceptable use of Electronics devices policy.
- The Diocese should include content about cultural diversity and cultural safety in its training materials. One of the ways this could be done is by inviting guest speakers from local communities/organisations to speak at training sessions.
- The Diocese has expressed an appetite for a Learning Management System to incorporate all safeguarding training modules, supplement face to face training with e-learning (which would make training more accessible to volunteers) and allow training participation to be better tracked. We support this as it would significantly enhance the Diocese's safeguarding training capacity, flexibility and 'user friendliness'.

#### ***Port Macquarie safeguarding training model***

*All personnel in the St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie are required to complete safeguarding training facilitated by a qualified safeguarding training facilitator engaged by the Parish.*

*Face to face safeguarding training sessions are run monthly and an online self-paced session is also available through the St Agnes Learning Management System (LMS). The training program developed by the Lismore Diocese Safeguarding Office focuses on appropriate conduct; safeguarding risk management; dealing with disclosures of abuse; reporting obligations; complaints handling; and e-safety. St Agnes' employees also participate in ongoing training programs such as conversations with children; trauma informed care; the risk, nature and impact of child abuse; peer on peer abuse; and responding to children and young people at risk.*

*In addition to the Diocese Safeguarding training program, St Agnes' Care and Lifestyle employees complete mandatory additional training on safeguarding relevant to their service area including Code of Conduct and NDIS Worker orientation Modules for those working with NDIS participants and for those working in Aged Care, Incident and Complaints management, Mandatory Reporting and Cultural Safety. Additional training is provided on trauma informed care, effects of institutionalisation, and addressing feedback and complaints.*

*Records are maintained by the Human Resources team. Monthly reports are generated to flag individuals due for training. Staff are also provided with regular education on policies and procedures through news articles, emails and posters. Policies and procedures are easily accessible on the staff intranet, the Parish Pulse.*

### ***The Diocesan Aged and Community Care Services conference***

*In September 2024, the Diocesan Aged and Community Care Services (DACCS) conference welcomed over 60 professionals from the aged and community care sector, providing an opportunity for them to connect and exchange ideas under the theme of 'Renewal and Reform'. The conference was coordinated by the Diocesan Aged Care Secretariat, which is coordinated by Ballina parish, and focused on how aged care services can navigate a complex regulatory environment while ensuring high-quality care for older people. The conference was addressed by Bishop Homeming, who highlighted the importance of compassion in caregiving and the Diocese's ongoing dedication to supporting aged and community care services.*

## **2.8 NCSS Standard 8 – Safe physical and online environments**

- The Diocese is in the process of revising its overall Risk Management Framework. In the meantime, risk assessment and management are well embedded in safeguarding policies, procedures and resources.
- There is a strong focus on providing safe physical environments and there was a high level of consciousness about this in the parishes we visited. Agencies and parishes are required to complete risk assessments for parish activities, and we sighted copies of these. The Safeguarding Office has developed a template and guidance document to assist parishes to complete risk assessments. The Diocese should formally document the requirement for parish priests to approve and sign risk assessments (this is included in the template but should be specified in the Safeguarding Manual and Safeguarding Risk Management Framework).
- The Diocese's youth coordinators have developed a Safeguarding Youth Ministry Guide and Checklist for organising parish and Diocesan youth ministry events which emphasises safeguarding mitigations. The Diocese has also developed a Safeguarding for Children's Liturgy guide to assist parishes.

- Parent consent is required for children to participate in parish activities and sign in sheets are used. Wherever possible, interactions between children and adults take place in open areas with clear lines of sight of other adults. The 'two adult rule' is well known throughout the Diocese. Separate areas are used for children to robe for altar service. St Agnes School told us they consistently observe priests implementing safe engagement practices when they are interacting with children.
- Some parishes (Port Macquarie and Kempsey) have CCTV installed in their sacristies. CCTV is also installed in the parish office and presbytery at Port Macquarie. Adjustments to church buildings have been made to open them up and make them more transparent. Some examples we observed were adding windows to the room where children robe for altar serving; replacing timber with glass in confessionals; and closing off the side gate entrance to a school from the parish.
- The Diocese has an IT Department which oversees, protects and monitors the online environment for the Chancery and some other agencies in the Diocese, however, parishes are only required to 'opt in'. It is recommended that all parishes should be required to either utilise the Diocese's IT Department or another suitable provider to ensure information is appropriately secured and protected.
- The Acceptable Use of Electronic Communication Systems (Including Email) and Devices Policy provides clear guidance about acceptable and unacceptable conduct and includes a warning about surveillance and monitoring as well as information about the potential outcomes of breaches.
- The Diocese has Film and Photography Guidelines and a Social Networking Policy which specify the steps that must be taken to safeguard children. These documents should be updated to recognise that adults may also be at risk, and to include guidance about ensuring consent is obtained from adults before their images are publicly shared.
- The Safeguarding Office assists parishes to manage risks associated with individuals in the parish who may pose a risk to children, such as parishioners who are known to have committed child related offences and wish to attend Mass. The Diocesan lawyer provides advice about appropriate restrictions. The Diocese has developed a 'Known Offender Safety Agreement' template which incorporates guidance about managing a person associated with causing risk in a parish. The template should be referenced in the Safeguarding Handbook and appended to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework.
- The Diocese's Deed of License for third party use of premises and equipment requires the user to ensure that all persons allowed on the premises or permitted to use the equipment to properly conduct themselves and ensure any person forbidden by the Diocese to use the premises or the equipment does not do so; ensure children to be properly supervised at all times; and comply with legislation. The Deed should be strengthened by adding an explicit standalone clause which requires users to have procurement policies that ensure safeguarding of children and adults at risk.

## 2.9 NCSS Standard 9 – Continuous improvement

- The Diocese's leadership is open about the importance of continuous improvement. The Diocese has proactively sought advice from well credentialled external advisers to inform its strategic planning. The Diocesan Safeguarding Strategic Plan demonstrates that the Diocese has identified realistic and targeted priority areas for improvement.
- The Diocese's reconstituted Safeguarding Council will be an important structural mechanism for driving continuous improvement, particularly in relation to endorsing Diocesan safeguarding policies and providing best practice advice. The Council will have input into future reviews of safeguarding policy and procedures as required and at least three yearly. The Council should also review and have input to the current Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028 and future iterations.
- The Diocese should ensure its Safeguarding Policy clearly explains the Diocese's safeguarding governance structure and its approach to monitoring and reviewing its safeguarding practices. As already noted, the key audit recommendation is about strengthening this structure so that the Bishop has better line of sight over how the Diocese's various agencies are executing their safeguarding responsibilities, to enable him to be confident that the Diocese as a whole is meeting these responsibilities. Implementing this recommendation, and the recommendations about refining various safeguarding policies, will be an important demonstration of commitment to continuous improvement.
- The Diocese's regular Safeguarding Newsletter, which is usually published on the website, is an excellent tool for sharing information and promoting continual improvement by communicating new requirements, changes to policies and procedures, training opportunities and resources. The newsletters are also used to invite feedback to policy reviews. While the new website is under construction, recent newsletters have not been uploaded but we were provided with copies which have been shared directly with agencies and parishes.
- The Diocese requires parishes to annually undertake a safeguarding self-assessment with the support of the Safeguarding Office. This generates an action plan for the parish to work towards. To reinforce what is required under the Child Safe Standards, parishes also complete the Office of the Children's Guardian self-assessment tool each year. These assessments and action plans are shared with the Safeguarding Office. The Safeguarding Plans developed by Byron Bay and Kempsey are both simple but effective good practice examples that clearly show how the parishes are implementing the Standards.
- To the extent possible, given the Safeguarding Office's limited resources, safeguarding staff conduct period support visits to parishes. This often occurs in conjunction with providing training. The Safeguarding Office is also remotely accessible to parishes to provide advice and support.
- The Diocese has committed to publish this audit report (and future NCSS audit reports) on its website and communicate the key findings and recommendations to the Diocesan community. The forthcoming clergy conference in November provides an ideal opportunity for the Diocese to communicate the key findings of the audit to those attending. They should also be communicated in the Safeguarding Newsletter and Catholic Life magazine.

- The Diocese should consider instigating an annual safeguarding conference which brings together the Safeguarding Office, clergy, parish secretaries/business managers and parish youth coordinators/pastoral associates to provide an opportunity to reflect on practice and exchange ideas.
- It would be prudent for the Diocese to commit to undertaking a future audit/s of compliance with the NCSS by the agencies/services that were outside the scope of this initial audit.

### ***Safeguarding Continuous Improvement – St Agnes parish***

*While the Safeguarding Implementation Plan is managed at a Diocesan level, St Agnes has completed a safeguarding gap analysis of the Parish's initiatives and has identified opportunities for improvement outlined in an action plan.*

*St Agnes's Safeguarding Working Group monitors compliance with the plan and the wider implementation of the NCSS. The Safeguarding Working Group reports progress and information weekly to the Executive Manager, Risk, Quality & Continuous and quarterly to the Parish Priest and the Board of Directors. Relevant information is disseminated to relevant service areas and to share with stakeholders, including via staff, client and parish newsletters, the website and staff intranet.*

*Safeguarding is a standard agenda item at the Quality and Risk Committee and a member of the Safeguarding Working Group attends monthly meetings to provide updates. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Working Group to complete an annual self-assessment which is coordinated by the Safeguarding Office. The Quality and Risk Committee reviews complaint and incident trends, and opportunities for improvement are identified and actioned. St Agnes Parish has a dedicated quality and compliance team to facilitate this process, and reports are provided to the Board of Directors. The Company Secretary and Pastoral Council maintain a register for any feedback and complaints.*

## **2.10 NCSS Standard 10 – Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults**

- The Diocese has a suite of safeguarding policies and procedures to support the safety of children and adults. The Diocese's entities (e.g. schools, early childhood services, aged care) also have their own policies which support safeguarding in their particular operational environments.
- The Diocese has a Code of Conduct which includes a range of inappropriate behaviours towards children that should be avoided, however, there would be merit in the Diocese developing a standalone Safeguarding Code of Conduct which should be cross-referenced back to the main Code of Conduct which allow a more fulsome list of specific inappropriate behaviours towards children and adults at risk to be listed.
- The Diocese is committed to progressively reviewing and updating its safeguarding policies and procedures. As such it should have regard to the observations and in this report about enhancing and refining key policies.

- The Diocese demonstrates transparency by making its safeguarding policies and procedures available on its website, promoting them through the Safeguarding Newsletters and sharing them throughout the Diocese via other means.
- The Diocese released a Safeguarding Framework in April which brings together information about key policies, procedures and resources. It was developed in response to feedback from parishes about the need for a more accessible 'ready reckoner' to support them to meet their safeguarding obligations and the Diocese is progressively revising and updating it to ensure it signposts/links to relevant, up to date resources.
- As the 'Framework' is in essence a handbook/manual, we recommend that it be renamed to reflect this, as 'framework' does not accurately describe what it is. As well, we recommend that the Diocese transitions the handbook to be an online interactive resource (similar to the approach taken by the Diocese of Broken Bay) so that it is easier to access and keep updated.
- The NCSS Standards are identified as a core component of the Diocese's safeguarding framework in the Diocesan Safeguarding Office Charter. They are also promoted and published on the Diocese's safeguarding webpage. Safeguarding training promotes the NCSS Standards.
- The Diocese provides training opportunities for personnel to reflect on their understanding and practical implementation of policies and procedures and provide feedback and ask questions.
- The Diocese is committed to regularly reviewing its safeguarding policies and procedures. It is the auditor's view that, rather than following the existing governance arrangements for the development and approval of general Diocesan policies, it would be appropriate for the Bishop to delegate responsibility for the ownership of safeguarding policy development and review to the Safeguarding Manager. Once developed/updated (with input from other parts of Diocese if required), safeguarding policies should be reviewed and endorsed by the Safeguarding Council before they are formally approved. For the avoidance of doubt, 'safeguarding policies' include:
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy
  - Safeguarding Code of Conduct
  - Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines
  - Mandatory Reporting Policy
  - Reportable Conduct Policy
  - Working with Children Check Policy
  - National Police Check Policy

### 3. Assessment of compliance with NCSS Indicators

Table 2: 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, is widely displayed and made publicly available.	✓			
<b>Observations:</b> Requirements of the indicators are in place. See Recommendation 1 for recommended enhancements.					
Criterion 1.2 - A culture of safeguarding children and adults is championed and modelled at all levels of the entity 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 safeguarding 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 mostly in place. Strengthening the Diocese's safeguarding governance structure will enable the Diocese to more fully embed indicator 1.2.1. See Recommendations 2 and 3.					

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 that accountability for the safeguarding of children and adults is clear.		✓		
1.3.2	Where the Church Authority's governance includes activities in countries other than Australia, these Standards are applied wherever possible, considering cultural differences and local jurisdictional issues.	Not applicable			
<b>Observations:</b>					
As above. Strengthening the Diocese's safeguarding governance structure will enable the Diocese to more fully embed indicator 1.3.1. See Recommendation 3.					
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 made available to all personnel, children, adults, 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>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;</li> <li>individuals who are elderly, are living with disability, are suffering from an illness, or who are 'at risk';</li> <li>individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds;</li> <li>children in out of home care, or those who 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.					

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>					
Requirements of the indicators are in place. See Recommendation 4 about enhancements to Safeguarding Risk Management Framework.					
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>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place.					
<b>Standard 2</b>		<b>Children and adults are safe, informed and participate</b>			
<b><i>Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously</i></b>					
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 engage with 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> Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendations 5, 6 and 7 for recommended enhancements.					
Criterion 2.2 - The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, helping children feel safe and less isolated.		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> Requirements of the indicator are in place.					
Criterion 2.3 - The importance of relationships and social connections for adults at risk is recognised and encouraged, helping them to feel safe and less isolated.		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> Requirements of the indicator are in place.					
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.		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> Requirements of the indicator are in place.					
<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>					
Criterion 3.1 – Parents, carers and/or guardians participate in decisions affecting their child, or adults with diminished capacity		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.					

Criterion 3.2 – Families, carers and communities are engaged with and are provided information about the entity’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-ordinator(s).	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 8 about identifying local opportunities for families, carers and community members to participate in safeguarding decisions and practices.					
Criterion 3.3 - Families, carers and communities are informed about the entity’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.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. As above.					
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.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place.					
<b>Standard 4</b>		<b>Equity is promoted and diversity is respected</b>			
<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 procedures address barriers that may prevent a disclosure of abuse being made; and that hinder personnel from recognising and responding appropriately.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place.					
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 complaints processes and support are provided in culturally safe, accessible, and easy to understand formats.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place. See Recommendations 13 and 14 about refinements to Complaint Handling Policy.					
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 indicator are in place.					
<b>Standard 5</b>		<b>Robust human resource management</b>			
<i>People working with children and adults are suitable and supported to reflect child 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 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 and/or adults at risk and appropriate safeguarding recruitment procedures are implemented.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 9 about refinements to Recruitment Policy.					
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 and 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	✓			
5.2.3	Records of all checks are maintained and monitored in accordance with legislation, for all personnel.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 10 about facilitating centralised monitoring of, and reporting on compliance with worker screening requirements across the Diocese.					
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	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.					
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 indicator are in place.					

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.	Not applicable			
5.5.2	Seminary and initial formation programs have robust screening processes for candidates, including external psychological and psychosexual assessments.	Not applicable			
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.	Not applicable			
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>					
While there is evidence that clergy participate in professional development, we were unable to confirm that all clergy are undertaking the required professional/pastoral supervision and regular appraisals. See Recommendation 11 about assigning responsibility for monitoring compliance with these requirements to an appropriate delegate of the Bishop.					
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			

<b>Observations:</b> N/A.					
Criterion 5.7 – The movement and credentialling of those in ministry is appropriately managed.		Developed & Embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to Develop
5.7.1	A system to assess the safeguarding credentials (good standing) and manage the movement of all seminarians, clergy, religious and lay ministers between different seminaries, formation programs and other Church entities is in place.	✓			
<b>Observations</b> Requirements of the indicator are in place. See Recommendation 12 about moving to electronic monitoring of visiting clergy.					
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.	✓			
<b>Observations</b> Requirements of the Indicators are in place.					
<b>Standard 6</b>		<b>Effective complaints management</b>			
<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 guidance on the response and action to be taken for different types of complaints, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>breaches of Codes of Conduct;</li> </ul>	✓			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 Complaints Handling Policy outlines how perceived or actual conflicts of interest are managed.	✓			
6.1.4	The Complaints Handling Policy acknowledges that power imbalances may exist between the complainant and respondent and has strategies in place to address this.	✓			
6.1.5	The Complaints Handling Policy spells out who has responsibilities in relation to handling complaints and when procedures are enacted.	✓			
6.1.6	Abuse complaints, incidents, allegations, disclosures, concerns and referrals are recorded, and confidential information is stored, protected and retained according to the Privacy Act, and for 50 years.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendations 13 and 15 about updating Reportable Conduct Policy and refining Complaint Handling Policy and Complaint Management Guidelines.					
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 Complaints Handling Policy and procedures demonstrate how the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk are prioritised.	✓			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the indicator are in place.					
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 and 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 or is alleging 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 cleric or religious is convicted of a canonical offence relating to sexual abuse, the respondent is to be prohibited from the exercise of ministry until such time as the process for imposing a penalty is completed by the relevant dicastery.	✓			

**Observations.**

Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 14 about finalising Complaint Investigation Procedure.

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
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6.4.1	The Complaints Handling Policy requires that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concerns and complaints of child abuse occurring within an entity be reported to the appropriate statutory authority/ies;</li> <li>concerns and/or complaints of serious offences against adults be reported to statutory authorities; and</li> <li>personnel cooperate with law enforcement procedures and directives.</li> </ul>	✓			
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**Observations**

Requirements of the indicator are in place. See Recommendation 15 about refining Complaint Handling Policy and Complaint Management Guidelines.

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.					
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 are engaged in consultation with the respondent 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.					
<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 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 relevant to their role.	✓			

<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 16 about developing an electronic Learning Management System.					
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	<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.					
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	<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 how 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.					
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; mandatory reporting to child protection authorities; Reportable Conduct Scheme;</li> <li>reporting to other regulatory authorities or government departments; and,</li> <li>Canonical reporting requirements</li> </ul>	✓			

**Observations**

Requirements of the Indicators are in place.

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**

See Recommendation 17 about incorporating guidance about diverse cultural backgrounds and cultural safe practice into training materials.

<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>					
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: one-to-one interactions between an adult and a child; ministries and/or services such as counselling, home visits, outreach, one-to-one tuition, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction and mentoring; potential physical contact between the penitent and the confessor where the sacrament of reconciliation is celebrated; one-to-one interaction with adults at risk; child-to-child interactions; adult-to-child interactions; adult-to-adult interactions (with consideration to power imbalances); and the nature of physical spaces.  Wherever possible, these interactions are conducted in an open or visible space, or within clear line of sight of another adult.	✓			
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.	✓			

**Observations**

Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 18 about formally documenting the requirement for parish priests to approve and sign risk assessments.

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.		✓		

**Observations**

Requirements of the Indicators are mostly in place. See Recommendation 19 about IT controls for parishes and early childhood services and Recommendation 21 about updating the Diocese's Film and Photography Guidelines and Social Networking Policy.

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
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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 Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 20 about developing and appending a Known Offender Safety Agreement to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework.					
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 organisation’s facilities appropriate safeguarding policies and practices are in place.		✓		
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 22 about adding an explicit safeguarding clause to the Diocesan Deed of License.					

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>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendation 1 about refinements to the Safeguarding Policy to articulate how safeguarding practices are monitored and reviewed.					
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 partly in place. See Recommendation 3 about strengthening safeguarding governance arrangements.					
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 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 NCSS audit			
<b>Observations</b>					
Requirements of the Indicators are in place. See Recommendations 23 about publishing this audit report and communicating key findings and Recommendation 24 about consideration of a future audit/s.					

<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 Indicator are in place.					
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 indicator are in place. See Recommendation 25 about the Safeguarding Handbook for parishes.					
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 mostly in place. See Recommendations 3 about strengthening safeguarding governance, Recommendation 26 about input by the Safeguarding Council to the Safeguarding Strategic Plan and Recommendation 27 about ownership of safeguarding policy development.					
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.					
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. See Recommendation 29 about consideration of an annual safeguarding conference.					

## 4. Audit recommendations

The audit recommendations are outlined below, together with the Diocese's response. Each recommendation has been categorised by priority against the scale in Appendix 2. Against a background where the Diocese is already performing very strongly, our recommendations aim to achieve further enhancements and, in some cases, to formally document and prioritise actions which the Diocese has indicated it is already implementing or considering. Commentary relating to the recommendations is contained in section 2. Where a recommendation is relevant to more than one Standard, this has been indicated.

Where no recommendations have been made in relation to a particular Standard, the Standard is not reproduced below.



### Standard 1: Committed leadership, governance and culture

*The safeguarding of children and adults is embedded in the entity's leadership, governance and culture*

#### Recommendation 1

<p>The Diocese should amend its Safeguarding Policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) better reflect the Diocese’s commitment to safeguarding adults as well as children, per the key competencies required under the NCSS Standards</li> <li>b) refer to the Safeguarding Strategic Plan and Safeguarding Risk Management Framework</li> <li>c) clearly explain the Diocese’s safeguarding governance structure and its approach to monitoring and reviewing its safeguarding practices</li> </ul> <p><i>Also relevant to Standards 9 and 10</i></p>	<p><b>Priority 3</b></p>
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<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk policy Recommendation 1 will be used as a guide within the review process.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Diocesan Safeguarding Council
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026

<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Diocese should amend the Safeguarding Council’s Terms of Reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) formalise the Bishop’s intention to meet with the Council annually</li> <li>b) specify the nature of key (deidentified) safeguarding data that will be reported to the Council to assist it to fulfil its role.</li> </ul> <p><i>Also relevant to Standard 9</i></p>	<p><b>Priority 3</b></p>
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<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Safeguarding’s Council’s Terms of Reference and agrees with Recommendation 2 and commits to amending the Safeguarding Council’s Terms of Reference.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026

<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>The Diocese should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) strengthen its safeguarding governance structure by enhancing reporting arrangements for the Diocesan Safeguarding Executive. In particular, it is recommended that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Diocese should formally identify and document the senior roles across the entities of the Diocese that have key safeguarding responsibilities (those to whom the responsibility for safeguarding is delegated by the Bishop) as the ‘Diocesan Safeguarding Executive’, and their safeguarding accountabilities to the Bishop.</li> <li>ii. The Safeguarding Executive should formally meet, at a regular interval, with the Vicar for Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Manager, for the purpose of discussing critical safeguarding and serious professional misconduct issues, and report to the Bishop against agreed and documented</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority 2</b></p>
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<p>safeguarding data and compliance indicators (through the Vicar for Safeguarding and the Safeguarding Manager).</p> <p>iii. To provide strategic line of sight over operational safeguarding data, the Safeguarding Executive should be formally required to notify the Safeguarding Manager, as soon as practicable, of serious abuse or misconduct involving children or vulnerable adults, including reportable allegations and incidents involving sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and serious neglect, being handled by entities of the Diocese.</p> <p>iv. The Safeguarding Manager should be required to formally report to the Vicar for Safeguarding) and maintain a register of all civil claims (including National Redress Scheme applications), reportable conduct notifications and serious abuse or misconduct matters being handled by the safeguarding Office or other entities of the Diocese, which will be reported on to the Bishop (via the Vicar for Safeguarding).</p> <p>v. amend the Safeguarding Office Charter to reflect the safeguarding governance structure and enhanced reporting arrangements</p> <p><i>Also relevant to Standard 9</i></p>	
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<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese agrees to implement Recommendation 3 in its entirety.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Vicar for Safeguarding & Safeguarding Manager
<b>Due date</b>	30 June, 2026

<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> The Diocese should:</p> <p>a) Expand the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework to document the main strategies employed by the Diocese to prevent, identify and mitigate safeguarding risks to children and adults (and link to related safeguarding policies) including (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Recruiting and training appropriate people</li> <li>ii. Creating and maintaining safe environments</li> <li>iii. Handling safeguarding concerns and complaints</li> <li>iv. Keeping records and sharing information</li> <li>v. Continuous improvement measures</li> </ul> <p>b) Ensure the Diocese’s overarching Risk Management Framework refers to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework</p> <p><i>Also relevant to Standards 8,9 and 10</i></p>	<p><b>Priority 3</b></p>
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<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Risk Management Framework and investigate the documentation of Recommendation 4.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan People and Culture and the Diocesan Safeguarding Office
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026



## Standard 2: Children and adults are safe, informed and participate

*Children and adults are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously*

<b>Recommendation 5</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should include a regular safeguarding page or column in its Catholic Life magazine for the purpose of sharing information about safeguarding rights, policies and resources. <i>Also relevant to Standard 3</i>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese commits to continuing to share safeguarding information throughout the Diocese within a variety of publications and media platforms.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Diocesan Communications Officer	
<b>Due date</b>	31 October, 2025	
<b>Recommendation 6</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should: a) strongly encourage all parishes to offer children's liturgy b) share (with permission) the children's liturgy operation resources (guidelines and duty statement) developed by Coffs Harbour with other parishes		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will encourage and support parishes who have an interest in establishing and offering a children's liturgy program, examples will be shared from parishes within the Diocese who already existing practices in place to support and guide.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Diocesan Pastoral Projects Leader	
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 7</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should: a) continue to encourage clergy to proactively engage with children and young people, implementing appropriate risk management strategies, as an important indicator of compliance with the NCSS b) consider opportunities for clergy who are more confident engaging with children and young people to informally mentor those who are less so <i>Also relevant to Standards 7 and 9</i>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese commits to developing a training package that will encourage and educate clergy in proactively engaging with children and young people. The Diocese will also consider an opportunity for mentorship.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Vicar for Safeguarding & Diocesan Safeguarding Office	

<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026
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### Standard 3: Partnering with families, carers and communities

*Families, carers and communities are informed and involved in promoting the safeguarding of children and adults*

<b>Recommendation 8</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should encourage each parish, as part of their annual safeguarding continuous improvement assessment, to identify opportunities (having regard to their areas of ministry and services) that provide families, carers and community members to participate in safeguarding decisions and practices.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	As part of each parishes annual safeguarding continuous improvement plan the Diocese will encourage parishes to reflect on ways they can invite, connect and encourage feedback from parishioners and community members on safeguarding decisions and practices of their parish.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	



### Standard 5: Robust human resource management

*People working with children and adults are suitable and supported to reflect safeguarding values in practice*

<b>Recommendation 9</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should amend its Recruitment Policy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) clearly reflect that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. position descriptions and recruitment advertisements must communicate safeguarding expectations</li> <li>ii. interview questions and reference checks for roles that involve direct contact with children and/or adults at risk must include safeguarding questions</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) refer to the templates/checklists appended in the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework to support safe recruitment</li> </ul>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Recruitment policy and will be guided by Recommendation 9 throughout this review.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Diocesan People & Culture offices from all Diocesan entities.	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	

<b>Recommendation 10</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should identify the best way of facilitating centralised monitoring of and reporting on compliance with worker screening requirements across the Diocese, having regard to the observations made in the report under Standard 5.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will research options to identify the best way of facilitating the monitoring and reporting on compliance across the Diocese and its entities regarding worker screening requirements.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Vicar for Safeguarding & Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 11</b>		<b>Priority 2</b>
The Bishop should delegate responsibility for monitoring and reporting to him on compliance with the requirements for clergy professional/pastoral supervision and appraisals to an appropriate person such as the Vicar General.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese commits to the implementation of Recommendation 11.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Vicar General & Clergy Life & Ministry	
<b>Due date</b>	1 May, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 12</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should consider partnering with the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta to utilise their electronic Ministry app for recording visiting clergy.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the current Visiting Clergy procedure and will explore various models used to record visiting clergy by a variety of Australian Diocese.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Chancellor, Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Personal Assistant to Bishop Homeming	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	



## Standard 6: Effective complaints management

*Processes for raising concerns and complaints are responsive, understood, accessible and used by children, adults, families, carers, communities and personnel*

<b>Recommendation 13</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should update its Reportable Conduct Policy to reflect the recent changes to the Children's Guardian Act relating to procedural fairness and disclosure of reportable conduct information.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Reportable Conduct Policy to reflect the recent changes to the Children's Guardian Act.	

<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 14</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should finalise its Complaint Investigation Procedure and append it to the Complaint Management Guidelines.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and continue to develop the Complaint Investigation Procedure.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 15</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
<p>The Diocese should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) refine its Complaint Handling Policy to appropriately signpost: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the different types of complaints that may be received (including levels of complaint)</li> <li>ii. the key personnel with responsibility for managing complaints and deciding the outcome of complaints</li> <li>iii. external reporting/notification responsibilities (i.e. police, mandatory reporting, reportable conduct)</li> <li>iv. how the people involved in a complaint will be supported</li> <li>v. available review options</li> <li>vi. complaint record keeping requirements</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) further refine the Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines by relocating the above information to the Complaint Handling Policy and focusing the guidelines on internal safeguarding responsibilities and processes</li> <li>c) provide the refined Complaint Handling Policy and Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines to the Safeguarding Council for endorsement</li> </ul>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and with Recommendation 15 as a guide continue to develop the Complaints Handling Policy.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	



## Standard 7: Ongoing education and training

*Personnel are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through information, ongoing education and training*

<b>Recommendation 16</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should prioritise building and implementing an online Learning Management System.		

<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese is currently researching and exploring various Learning Management Systems and platforms.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan People & Culture office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 17</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should incorporate content about diverse cultural backgrounds and cultural safe practice into its training materials.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will prioritise the development and incorporate content about diverse cultural backgrounds and cultural safe practices into its training materials.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	



## Standard 8: Safe physical and online environments

*Physical and online environments promote safety and contain appropriate safeguards to minimise the opportunity for children and adults to be harmed.*

<b>Recommendation 18</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should formally document the requirement for parish priests to approve and sign risk assessments in the Safeguarding Manual for parishes and the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the Safeguarding Manual for parishes and the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework to formally document who is required to approve and sign risk assessments for parish activities.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 19</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should require all parishes to either utilise the Diocese's IT Department or another suitable provider to ensure information is appropriately secured and protected		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the current providers that parishes are using to store parish information. The Diocesan IT Department will support parishes to ensure the information is appropriately secure and protected.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan IT Team	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	

<b>Recommendation 20</b> The Diocese should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) append the Known Offender Safety Agreement to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework</li> <li>b) incorporate related guidance about managing a person associated with causing risk in the Safeguarding Handbook for parishes</li> </ul>		<b>Priority 3</b>
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and append the known offender safety agreement to the Safeguarding Risk Management Framework and will incorporate guidance in the Safeguarding Handbook for parishes.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 21</b> The Diocese should update its Film and Photography Guidelines and a Social Networking Policy to recognise risks to adult and include guidance about ensuring consent is obtained from adults before their images are publicly shared.		<b>Priority 3</b>
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and continue to develop the Film and Photography Guidelines and Social Networking Policy to recognise risks to adults and to include guidance to obtain an adult’s consent for their images to be publicly shared.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 22</b> The Diocese should amend its Deed of License for third party use of premises and equipment by adding an explicit standalone clause which requires users to have procurement policies that ensure safeguarding of children and adults at risk.		<b>Priority 3</b>
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and continue to develop the Deed of License for third party use of premises and equipment.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Lawyer	
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026	



## Standard 9: Continuous improvement

*Entities regularly review and improve implementation of their systems for keeping children and adults safe*

<b>Recommendation 23</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should publish this audit report on its website and communicate the key audit findings at the forthcoming clergy conference in November 2025, in the Safeguarding Newsletter and in the Catholic Life magazine.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will publish the Audit Report on the Safeguarding page of the Diocesan website, when accepted by the ACSL Board. The Diocese will communicate the key findings at the Clergy Conference held in November 2025. The Diocese will communicate the key findings of the Audit Report to Leadership, Boards and in various Diocesan publications.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office & Diocesan Communications Officer	
<b>Due date</b>	10 November, 2025	
<b>Recommendation 24</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should commit to undertaking a future audit/s of compliance with the NCSS by the agencies/services that were outside the scope of this initial audit.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will explore the undertaking of a future audit/s of compliance with the NCSS by the agencies/services that were outside the scope of the initial audit.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	



## Standard 10: Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults

*Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.*

<b>Recommendation 25</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) change the name of the Safeguarding Framework to the Safeguarding Handbook to more accurately reflect the nature of the resource</li> <li>b) transition the handbook to the upgraded Diocesan website so that it can be accessed and updated as an online interactive resource rather than a standalone document</li> </ul>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the name change of the Safeguarding Framework to reflect the nature of the resource and the audience who utilise this document.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026	

<b>Recommendation 26</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Safeguarding Council should review and provide feedback about the Diocese's Safeguarding Strategic Plan 2025-2028 and future iterations of the plan.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will request the Safeguarding Council reviews the provides feedback about the Diocese Strategic Plan 2025-2028.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due Date</b>	31 March, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 27</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
<p>The Bishop should delegate responsibility for safeguarding policy development and review to the Safeguarding Manager who will ensure they are endorsed by the Safeguarding Council before being formally approved. For the avoidance of doubt, 'safeguarding policies' include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>b) Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy</li> <li>c) Safeguarding Code of Conduct</li> <li>d) Safeguarding Complaint Management Guidelines</li> <li>e) Mandatory Reporting Policy</li> <li>f) Reportable Conduct Policy</li> <li>g) Working with Children Check Policy</li> <li>h) National Police Check Policy</li> </ul>		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review the current Safeguarding Policy development responsibilities and consider recommendation 27 in the review.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Bishop Homeming	
<b>Due date</b>	31 March, 2026	
<b>Recommendation 28</b>		<b>Priority 3</b>
The Diocese should develop a standalone Safeguarding Code of Conduct which focuses on describing the behaviours to avoid when dealing with children and adults at risk.		
<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will review and develop the Code of Conduct to focus on describing the behaviours to avoid when dealing with children and adults at risk. The Diocese will consider the development of a standalone Safeguarding Code of Conduct.	
<b>Responsibility</b>	Diocesan Safeguarding Office	
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026	

**Recommendation 29**

The Diocese should consider holding an annual safeguarding conference which brings together the Safeguarding Office, clergy, parish secretaries/business managers and parish youth coordinators/pastoral associates to reflect on safeguarding practice and promote collaboration.

**Priority 3**

<b>Agreed Action</b>	The Diocese will consider Recommendation 29. The Diocese commits to reviewing established conferences held within the Diocese and ensuring Safeguarding is an agenda item at these.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Vicar for Safeguarding & Diocesan Safeguarding Office
<b>Due date</b>	1 September, 2026

## Appendix 1: Compliance Assessment Scale

	<b>General</b>	<b>Processes &amp; Systems</b>	<b>People &amp; Resources</b>
<b>Yet to Develop</b>	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.
<b>Developing</b>	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.
<b>Developed</b>	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.
<b>Developed and embedded</b>	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 breakdowns in processes. Resources have been assigned to monitor and address requirements.

## Appendix 2: Audit finding priorities

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

<b>Priority 1</b>	<b>Priority 2</b>	<b>Priority 3</b>
<p>Gaps or control weaknesses have been identified resulting in non-compliance with the indicator. 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. Mitigation actions are required to be developed and initiated within 3 months or earlier from the issuance of this report, with expected resolution within 6-9 months.</p>	<p>Issues have been identified which represent minor procedural weaknesses or improvement opportunities with respect to the operation of the indicator. Expected resolution is within 12 months or earlier from the issuance of this report.</p>

## Appendix 3: 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. 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>	<p>means any person aged 18 years and over who is at increased risk of experiencing abuse, such as people:</p> <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/who have any other impairment or adversity that makes it difficult for them to protect themselves from abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>Allegation</b>	<p>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".</p>
<b>Audit</b>	<p>means a mechanism to assess how a Church Authority, ministry or entity governed by a Church Authority, is implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.</p>
<b>Australian Catholic Bishops Conference</b>	<p>means the assembly of Bishops of Australia exercising together certain pastoral offices for the Catholics of Australia.</p>
<b>Bishop</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Canon law</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Canonical Offence</b>	<p>means canonical crimes 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>The canonical crimes/delicts/offences committed by clerics or religious as stated in Art. 1 §1 a) of Vos Estis Lux Mundi.  Definition of vulnerable person as stated in Art. 1 §2 b) of Vos Estis Lux Mundi: "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'</p>

	within the NCSS.
<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>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.</p> <p>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’, <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, archdiocese, ordinariate or personal prelatry 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> </ul> poor standards of care.
<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.
<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.