



Safeguarding audit report
for the Catholic Diocese
of Maitland-Newcastle

Media Statement: Safeguarding audit report for the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
28 February 2024

A rigorous safeguarding audit of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has assessed a 98 per cent compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) according to the audit report published by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) today.

Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle, the Most Reverend Michael Kennedy asked that the audit be particularly rigorous. ACSL partnered with Prolegis Lawyers, an independent legal firm, in the audit. Thirty-four per cent of the Diocese's parishes were visited as were three schools and the Diocese's head offices. Over 100 people were also interviewed.

The ACSL-Prolegis audit of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle found that 96 (98 per cent) out of the 98 relevant indicators were 'Developed and Embedded' or 'Developed'.

The auditors made seven recommendations to improve safeguarding practices within the Diocese. These recommendations were accepted in full by the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, and work has already commenced on implementing them. Audit recommendations are classified according to priority and urgency for remediation. There are no Priority 1 (high priority) recommendations for the Diocese.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ursula Stephens, said that the audit demonstrated that the Diocese has comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures. She acknowledged the efforts of the Diocesan safeguarding personnel to ensure that policies were being met in practice.

"Without doubt, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle demonstrates it is committed to addressing the Church's sad history in this area. Across the Diocese and in every

Ministry, strong safeguarding practices are evident. Our recommendations for improvement reflect the contemporary aspects of safeguarding regulation, and, given the far-reaching commitment to safeguarding demonstrated, I expect these protocols will soon be addressed," said Dr Stephens.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle comprises 38 parishes in the Hunter-Manning region with 66 active or retired clergy, over 5,500 paid staff operating from more than 100 locations and more than 5,000 volunteers undertaking a variety of ministries within the Diocese. The Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle is Michael Kennedy, installed on 17 March 2023.

Bishop Kennedy said that he was particularly pleased with the auditors' summary judgement that said that "the Diocese is successfully implementing and embedding a culture of safeguarding throughout its organisation."

Bishop Kennedy also said "There is more to do. As Bishop, I assure you that over the coming years the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle will maintain its current momentum and will continue to refine and improve our safeguarding knowledge and practices, so that the safeguarding of each child and every vulnerable person is a wholly integrated and intrinsic part of everything that we do in our Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle."

The NCSS, based on recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and aligned with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, provide the framework for Catholic Church entities to build child-safe cultures and to advance the safety and dignity of children and vulnerable people across the Catholic Church in Australia.

Scan the QR code to
read the full audit report




Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

NCSS Overview



The audit activities of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd and Prolegis Lawyers found that the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has demonstrated compliance with 98 per cent of the indicators relevant to their operations under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2 (NCSS). This means that implementation of 96 out of a possible 98 indicators were either progressed or substantially progressed when reviewed against our compliance assessment scale.

As a full audit entity, the Diocese was assessed against Standards 1-10 of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2, assessing safeguarding compliance for both children and adults at risk. Here are the results against each Standard, showing the degree to which the requirements of each Standard have been implemented. A fully dark green line shows where the standard has been assessed as implemented, while a light green line indicates where there is still progress to be made in order to fully embed the Standard:

-  **Standard 1 : Committed leadership, governance & culture**
-  **Standard 2 : Children and adults are safe, informed and participate**
-  **Standard 3 : Partnering with families, carers and communities**
-  **Standard 4 : Equity is promoted and diversity is respected**
-  **Standard 5 : Robust human resource management**
-  **Standard 6 : Effective complaints management**
-  **Standard 7 : Ongoing education and training**
-  **Standard 8 : Safe physical and online environments**
-  **Standard 9 : Continuous improvement**
-  **Standard 10 : Policies and procedures support the safety of children and adults**



This safeguarding audit was conducted by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd and Prolegis Lawyers between October 2023 - January 2024 and assessed compliance against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards Edition 2. The NCSS seek to build a culture of shared responsibility for safeguarding and to ensure that policies, practices and codes of behaviour work in unison to prevent, detect and respond appropriately to potential or actual incidents of abuse.

In this context, the audit processes we have undertaken are intended to provide reasonable assurance that safeguarding controls have been designed appropriately and are operating effectively. Accordingly, our review provides a point-in-time assessment of the safeguarding practices implemented by the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and the extent of its compliance with the requirements of the NCSS.

The ACSL certification represents a three-year partnership with organisations to support continuous improvement. This certification is valid until January 2027.



Our commitment

As the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle I expect us all to be attentive to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of every child and vulnerable person in everything we do in the name of the Church. Each one of us is responsible to ensure we are aware of the signs of abuse, that we know how to respond to a disclosure of abuse and we know how to report our concerns. Most importantly, I require every worker in the Diocese to be prepared, should the situation ever arise, to call out the unsafe or abusive behaviour of colleagues and workmates. The conduct we walk past is the conduct we have condoned.



The Diocese is committed to:

- ▶ Fostering communities of safeguarding, including open and respectful communication about issues of safeguarding with individuals, families and groups
- ▶ Upholding the dignity and rights of all children and vulnerable persons and empowering them to have their voices heard
- ▶ Training all workers in safeguarding knowledge and skills including indicators of abuse, supporting people to disclose abuse and reporting abuse
- ▶ Working closely with statutory authorities to report alleged abuse and support them to investigate those allegations
- ▶ Developing our risk assessment and management systems for all diocesan activities and personnel
- ▶ Developing the breadth and depth of our auditing and compliance regimes
- ▶ Implementing and maintaining compliance with the NSW Child Safe Standards and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

“ Pope Francis has called all of us in the Catholic Church “to assume responsibility for preventing cases of abuse and to work for justice and for healing”. I now amplify and specify the Pope’s message. The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Every one of us must each day commit ourselves individually and collectively to safeguard each child and every vulnerable person to whom we minister and interact with.

MOST REV BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY



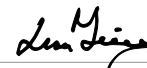
Vicar General & Chancellor
Fr Matthew Muller



Vicar General
Fr Greg Barker



Chief Executive Officer
Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
Sean Scanlon



Chief Operating Officer
Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
Lisa Tierney



Director
CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning
Gary Christensen



Head of
Catholic Schools
Steven Lemos



Director of
Safeguarding
Sean Tynan



Director
Pastoral Ministries
Teresa Brierley



Executive Director
St Nicholas Early Education
David Healy