

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Safeguarding review of Order of Discalced Carmelite Nuns Goonellabah marks first published self-report of a Catholic entity

6 September 2023

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) has this week published a safeguarding review for the Order of Discalced Carmelite Nuns Goonellabah.

The Order of Discalced Carmelite Sisters (OCD Sisters) Goonellabah are an enclosed, contemplative religious community based in country NSW. The OCD Sisters are not engaged in public ministry and have a low safeguarding risk.

ACSL CEO Ursula Stephens said that due to these factors, a self-report against the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards that could be validated by ACSL was the most appropriate approach.

‘Every Catholic organisation, no matter their size, has safeguarding responsibilities. Measuring progress in implementing safeguarding processes is a vital way we learn if we are on the right track. However, we acknowledge that a one-size fits all approach to review won’t work for all Catholic organisations, given how much ministries and activities can vary from one organisation to another.’

‘For the OCD Sisters Goonellabah, who dedicate themselves to a life of prayer, theirs is a completely contemplative life, which is conducted with clear separation from the public. The sisters do however have women in formation and potential aspirants who may enter formation in coming years. There is limited engagement with the general public.’

‘Making sure that key principles of the NCSS are in place or in development are things that we will examine for each organisation we review, regardless of their size or the nature of the ministry. These include assessing whether human resources frameworks that check people are safe to perform ministry are in place, whether complaints processes are documented and workable, and if there is a safeguarding culture being established and emphasised throughout the organisation.’

‘Under ACSL’s risk-based review framework, we determined that the OCD Sisters could complete a self-report against the NCSS, using the self-assessment portal developed by ACSL. We then validated the information and documentation provided by the Sisters through our own desktop review. We also followed this up through interviews with key personnel involved in the safeguarding process within the Order.’

‘The Self-Report completed by the OCD Sisters and our subsequent report validation showed us that the Sisters have fully implemented and embedded the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards as they apply to their Congregation.’

‘This is a very impressive result and demonstrates the commitment of a small order who have nonetheless worked hard to establish processes that aim to make their community a safe community for everyone.’

We have made recommendations for further improvement. The Sisters will now have 12 months to work through the recommendations before we follow up with them to assess their progress,’ Dr Stephens said.

The self-report validation is available on [ACSL’s website](#).

ACSL works with Catholic entities to promote and oversee a nationally consistent, comprehensive and sustainable framework for the protection of children and adults at risk within the Church in Australia.

ACSL is working with Australian Catholic Church entities to reach the goal of having all Catholic entities audited or reviewed against the NCSS by 2025. Australian Catholic entities have the choice of engaging ACSL as an auditor or selecting from a range of audit providers on the newly established [NCSS External Auditor Register](#).

Media contact: Kat Beavis 0400 825 954