

- MEDIA RELEASE -

ACSL supports fast-tracking a national WWCC system as an urgent priority

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Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) has endorsed the call by the Federal Education Minister Jason Clare to urgently implement reforms to the Working with Children Checks system.

ACSL Chief Executive Officer Dr Ursula Stephens said a standardised and nationalised system is long overdue.

‘The recent shocking revelations of alleged abuse of children in a childcare centre in Victoria is an urgent reminder of the need to strengthen child safety standards across all sectors engaged with children and young people,’ Dr Stephens said.

‘The Australian Catholic Church is continuing its efforts to navigate the challenges associated with the absence of a national Working with Children Check system, as recommended by the Royal Commission in 2017.’

‘The Australian Catholic Ministry Register or ACMR is a system used by Catholic dioceses and many religious institutes to make sure clergy and religious have a WWCC and meet additional internal standards needed to safely work with children and vulnerable people anywhere in Australia.’

‘As well as capturing relevant WWCC details, the ACMR requires declarations from church leaders about the “good standing” of clergy and religious, in that they have not behaved in a way that suggests a risk to the safety and welfare of children or adults.’

‘ACSL fully supports urgent national reform of Working with Children Checks, but our commitment goes further – a Working with Children Check is not a safeguarding strategy on its own and it must be part of an integrated approach that includes robust recruitment, ongoing supervision, clear standards of behaviour, and effective complaint and investigation processes.’

‘These reforms are just one part of the broader conversation about safeguarding children and vulnerable people that is desperately needed.’

‘This includes a national registration system for children’s service workers, an investment in training and supervision, and specialised abuse intervention and prevention services,’ Dr Stephens said.