

- MEDIA RELEASE -

Collaboration key to safeguarding approach across Carmelite Fathers ministries

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A safeguarding audit report of the Carmelite Fathers Australia & Timor-Leste published today by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) has found strong commitment to child safety across the religious institute's operations.

The audit assessed the Carmelite Fathers' progress in implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), a framework for the safety and protection of children in Catholic organisations.

The Carmelite Fathers' work in Australia serves communities across a variety of operations, including administering three parishes in partnership with local dioceses, working as chaplains in hospitals and schools, and running a spirituality and retreat centre. Since 2001, the Carmelite Fathers also provide ministries in Timor-Leste focused on forming young men as seminarians.

ACSL's audit processes involved a thorough review of the Carmelite's safeguarding processes and policies, interviews with key safeguarding personnel, members of the Carmelites in Australia and Timor-Leste, and a site visit to an Australian parish administered by the religious institute.

ACSL CEO Dr Ursula Stephens said that the Carmelite Fathers were able to demonstrate that 97 per cent of the NCSS criteria and indicators relevant to the institute were either fully implemented, or substantially progressed at the time of audit.

'Through our audit we noted the great opportunities the Carmelite Fathers have for sharing safeguarding knowledge in the parishes; they have a presence which extends across two archdioceses and a diocese. Moreover, the parishes benefit from the support offered by Professional Standards Units within the dioceses, with the dioceses in turn benefiting from the resources the Carmelite Fathers have developed for their institute. Their willingness to work together is a critical component of creating a safe Church for everyone,' Dr Stephens said.

'The same commitment to the safety of children, and seminarians, was apparent through the Carmelite Fathers work in Timor-Leste. The institute has engaged a local non-government agency to assist them in implementing effective safeguarding practices with cultural sensitivity. This strategy also includes ongoing training and safeguarding resources being translated in Tetum, the main language used in Timor-Leste.'

'As with any audit, there are learnings and opportunities for improvement. We have provided six recommendations to the Carmelite Fathers that will further strengthen their ability to provide a safe environment for all people. These include formally appointing a dedicated safeguarding officer to the operations in Timor-Leste, updating core safeguarding policies to address children as well as adults at risk, creating detailed risk registers, and ensuring safeguarding materials are child-friendly and accessible for both children and adults at risk,' Dr Stephens said.

The audit report of the Carmelite Fathers Australia and Timor-Leste is available through the Publications and Reports area of [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.