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**ARCHDIOCESAN MEDIA OFFICE**

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## STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

Dated: Wednesday 26 February 2025

Subject: Release by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) of Archdiocesan Safeguarding Audit.

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**The Catholic Archdiocese of Perth today welcomed the release by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited (ACSL) of its Audit Report pertaining to the archdiocese's implementation of the NCSS, a framework of 10 standards developed to promote the safety of children and adults at risk in Catholic organisations.**

This was the first audit of the Archdiocese of Perth's Safeguarding Program, policies and operations since the NCSS was established. Conducted by Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL) in collaboration with Australian Audit, the audit took place between July and September 2024. Fieldwork during the audit period included visits to 27 parishes, 7 agencies, 3 chaplaincies and 3 communities of the archdiocese, in addition to interviews with diocesan leaders and key personnel.

The audit found that the Archdiocese of Perth has fully implemented or substantially progressed 90% of relevant indicators from the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS).

Key strengths identified by the auditors included a strong public commitment to safeguarding in the archdiocese and an extensive safeguarding program with a network of dedicated volunteers in parishes and ministries:

- The auditors noted that the archdiocese has a strong public commitment to safeguarding that includes taking a zero-tolerance approach to abuse.
- The archdiocese's network of dedicated safeguarding officers, all of whom are volunteers, was noted as essential for developing and sustaining a culture of safety in the parishes and agencies of the archdiocese.
- The archdiocese's establishment of a centralised Safeguarding Program Office was commended, with the auditors noting the extensive support, advice and resources provided by the office to parishes and ministries.
- Policies and procedures of the archdiocese were identified as comprehensive, thoroughly documented, reviewed regularly, easily accessible and championed by leaders.

The Archdiocese of Perth acknowledges that the final report includes a number of areas where enhancements can and will be made. These areas include:

- Providing additional support and direction to members of the clergy to facilitate an increase in regular participation and access to existing professional/pastoral supervision, mentoring and programmes of ongoing formation.
- Areas for growth included the recommendation that the archdiocesan-wide risk framework be extended to encompass further risk management practices in parishes. It was noted that the recent appointment of an archdiocesan Risk and Compliance Manager will help to advance this work.

- The report acknowledged that an extensive range of resources have been developed for the safeguarding of children. However additional resources for promoting the protection of adults at risk would be beneficial in parish and ministry settings.
- Whilst cultural safety training is available, the report suggested that further promotion and adoption in parishes is required to ensure personnel are equipped to create culturally safe environments.

Following the official release of the Archdiocese's First Audit Report, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Catholic Archbishop of Perth, expressed his gratitude to the Auditors for taking the time to conduct the audit and for compiling their observations in the audit report.

**“This report”, he said, “will serve as an invaluable resource that will guide our safeguarding endeavours in the months and years ahead.**

We are encouraged by the positive outcomes contained in this report and recommit ourselves anew to addressing areas noted for improvement, doing whatever is necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all who engage in the settings and ministries of our archdiocese.

**On behalf of the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, I reaffirm that the protection of children and vulnerable adults remains the Church's highest priority, and we will continue to work together to ensure the safety of children and adults at risk within our parishes, agencies and organisations.**

I am pleased to report that work has already commenced in the areas identified by the audit for further development. This will augment our safeguarding program and strengthen existing activities and practices.

To all those who work tirelessly in this archdiocese in support of our Safeguarding Program – in our parishes, agencies, organisations and ministries – employees and volunteers - you are all appreciated and valued. I wish to sincerely thank each and every one of you.

But our work in promoting and providing absolute places of safety for children and adults at risk in our Church knows no boundary, no timeframes.

**We must, together, remain vigilant, committed, responsive and adaptive to ensure we deliver the best possible safeguarding program in this archdiocese”** said Archbishop Costelloe SDB.

End statement.