

Safeguarding audit for the Benedictine Community of New Norcia published

Monday 2nd March

A safeguarding audit report published today by Catholic Professional Standards Ltd (CPSL) has found that the Benedictine Community of New Norcia (BCNN) has demonstrated compliance with 99 per cent of the indicators relevant to their operations under the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS).

Located 130km north-east of Perth via the Great Northern Highway, BCNN is the only monastic town in Australia. Founded in 1847 by Spanish Benedictine monks, New Norcia has had a range of functions over the years, including as an Aboriginal mission, monastery, boarding schools for Indigenous and other children, a working farm and today offers itself as a place for spiritual retreat.

There are currently nine monks living in the community at New Norcia, with the current Abbot, Fr John Herbert OSB, installed in 2009. BCNN has 39 employees and a small number of volunteers who work in various capacities throughout the town.

BCNN was named in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse as having had a number of claims of child sexual abuse made against a number of monks (all now deceased) and BCNN's previous institutions.

BCNN's direct engagement with children today is limited. Guided tours of the historic town are run for the public daily and a range of accommodation options are hired and used regularly by visiting school groups for camps and other school-related activities. Due to the presence of the school groups on site, as well as children participating in guided tours of the town, BCNN has been assessed as a "Category One" Church entity for application of the NCSS (Working with Children).

CPSL CEO Sheree Limbrick said that it is evident BCNN takes its safeguarding responsibilities seriously and that BCNN employs a whole of community approach to safeguarding.

"Many of BCNN's employees both work and live in the New Norcia community. The nature of the relationship between the monks, the services offered at New Norcia and the local community means that engagement with families and community in relation to safeguarding is strong", said Ms Limbrick.

The audit by CPSL has resulted in two recommendations for BCNN to strengthen their safeguarding practices. There are no Priority 1 (high rated) audit recommendations for BCNN.

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 across the Catholic Church in Australia.

CPSL is working with a range of other Catholic entities to assess their progress in implementing the NCSS and will release further audit reports as they are completed.

The full audit report is available on CPSL's website [here](#).

Catholic Professional Standards Ltd is a not-for-profit public company, limited by guarantee. It was established by the leadership of the Catholic Church during the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to develop national safeguarding standards, to audit the compliance of Church Authorities with those standards and to publicly report the results. CPSL has a lay Board of Directors with sole responsibility for the content and publication of audit reports.

Media contact: Katherine Beavis 0400 825 954 / 1300 603 411