



# **MEDIA STATEMENT**

## **22 NOVEMBER 2016**

### **CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA LAUNCHES NEW COMPANY TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 21 NOVEMBER AT MIDNIGHT AEDT**

A new independent company to be established by the Catholic Church to develop, audit and report on compliance with professional standards to protect children and vulnerable people was announced today by church leaders

Catholic Professional Standards (CPS) Limited represents a new national Church response to the importance of safeguarding vulnerable people. It will be responsible for setting the highest standards to ensure the safety of individuals involved with the Church at all levels and engaging with Catholic service providers.

CPS will:

- Develop new standards for the protection of children and vulnerable adults across Church entities particularly in areas where there are currently no current relevant standards
- Audit and report on the compliance of each Church authority against the new professional standards
- Provide education and training regarding the new standards

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, which represent more than 200 independent Catholic entities across Australia, made the joint announcement of the new company during the bishops plenary meeting with religious leaders at Mary MacKillop Place, Sydney today.

Member Representative of CPS and President of Catholic Religious Australia, Sr Ruth Durick OSU, said the new entity sets a new standard for the Catholic Church in Australia.

“I am confident that CPS will direct and govern best practice for all Church agencies to lead in the area of safeguarding children and vulnerable people.

“Today’s announcement marks a significant development in how the Church in Australia operates. Independently of Church, CPS will establish implement, govern and audit professional standards. This is a first.

“It is a decisive step forward for the Church as we move beyond the Royal Commission. We look ahead with safety, respect and authenticity at the core of all we do in the community.”

Speaking at the launch, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Vice-President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference said CPS is the Church’s considered response to a crisis that has been heartbreaking for so many people.

“I believe that Catholic Professional Standards will continue the cultural change that has commenced through the work of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council,” Archbishop Coleridge said.

A Board of Directors is currently being established by the ACBC and CRA. The Board will operate and function independently of the Church.



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Three directors have been identified and another four appointments to the Board are to be made. A Chief Executive Officer will be recruited and appointed during 2017.

The three director designates are:

- The Hon Geoffrey Giudice AO, who was President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission from 1997 until 2009 and the inaugural President of Fair Work Australia (now the Fair Work Commission) from 2009 until February 2012
- Ms Patricia Faulkner AO, who was secretary of the Department of Human Services in Victoria with this portfolio including the child protection system and in 2015/16 was a deputy commissioner of the Victorian Royal Commission enquiring into family violence
- The Hon John Watkins AM, who was a member of the NSW Parliament between 1995 and 2008 with Ministerial portfolios including Education, Police and Transport, serving as Deputy Premier for three years and is currently CEO of Alzheimer's Australia NSW

It is expected that Catholic Professional Standards will be up and running by early 2017.

The work of the National Committee for Professional Standards will be absorbed into the new entity over time. There will be no change at present to State based professional standards offices.

**Further information, [www.catholicprofessionalstandards.org.au](http://www.catholicprofessionalstandards.org.au)**

### **Media Contact**

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