A STRONGER WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK TO MOVE TO A NEW HOME

Minister for Family and Community Services Pru Goward, and Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello, today announced the new Working With Children Check would commence from 15 June 2013 and its operation streamlined from four separate agencies into one regulatory unit, under the jurisdiction of the NSW Children's Guardian.

“The development of a new Working With Children Check system has been a significant undertaking by the NSW Government,” Mr Dominello said.

“NSW will be the first state in Australia to have a secure online system designed to be strong, more robust and efficient for both employers and workers, with clearer results. “The new Check will provide either a bar or a clearance, replacing a system that allowed employers to employ some high risk people.

“Adults convicted of sexual offences or serious violence offences against children and other adults determined to be a high risk will be barred from working with children. “A person’s full criminal record will be able to be considered for the first time.

“The new Check will also allow for continuous monitoring of new NSW criminal and disciplinary records - currently no further checking is done.

“The new Check will initially apply to people seeking new child-related jobs and will be phased in over the next four years to cover all child-related workers, except for limited exemptions, such as some parent volunteers in schools or sporting clubs”.

Ms Goward said the new Working With Children Check had received $4.33 million in start up funding in 2011/12 with additional operating costs of up to $7.2 million between 2012 and 2016.

“The NSW Children’s Guardian already plays a strong regulatory role in child protection and children’s employment, and that’s why I am pleased the Children’s Guardian will report directly to me, with the Office of the Children’s Guardian to be a new standalone Public Service Division within the Family and Community Services cluster, with separate funding from the Department, Ms Goward said.

“The Children’s Guardian will remain a strong independent voice able to directly report to me and Parliament. That independence is critical because, for example, the Children’s Guardian is responsible for accrediting and monitoring out-of-home care providers, including Community Services.
“It makes good sense to have the regulatory functions of the new Working With Children Check and responsibility for encouraging child safe organisations to be positioned in a regulatory environment that will support and compliment future improved service delivery as well as child protection reforms.

“The new Check is an accreditation system and the Children’s Guardian is a specialist accreditation body. The Check and child safe organisation functions are a great fit with the Children’s Guardian’s role in regulating the employment of children in the entertainment and related industries.

“The new Check also aligns with the Children’s Guardian’s development of the Carers Register, which will ensure all foster and relative carers have undergone required checks and assessments and provide a record of carers’ authorisation histories.

“Out-of-home care and adoption agencies will now be dealing with one body that looks at their checking systems, rather than two, reducing red-tape and minimising the risk of any problems in their systems falling through the gap,” Ms Goward said.

“These improved regulatory arrangements do not deliver savings, only improved arrangements to protect children and young people within one strong independent body.

“Indeed, more resources will be invested to boost regulatory protections for children and young people,” Ms Goward said.

“The relocation of the Working With Children Check also provides an opportunity for the NSW Commission for Children and Young People to consult with key stakeholders with a view of developing a stronger advocacy and policy structure for children and young people”, Mr Dominello said.

“Legislation to provide for the Children’s Guardian as a stronger child protection regulator will be introduced this Parliamentary session”, Mr Dominello said.

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