

Inquiry received: 25 May 2018

Journalist:

Organisation: Holding Lines and speaking points

Deadline:

Subject:

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Inquiry:

Category: 3

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice and Attorney General:

Under the statutory provisions protecting individual privacy contained in the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*, Blue Card Services Queensland cannot comment on an individual's Blue Card status.

The Working with Children Check (also known as the blue card check) assesses a person's eligibility to hold a blue card or exemption card based on their known past police and disciplinary information. This may include conduct as both an adult and a juvenile. It is a check that assesses:

- any national charge or conviction (including spent convictions and pending and non-conviction charges) for an offence (even if no conviction was recorded), child protection prohibition orders (whether a person is a respondent or subject to an application), disqualification orders;
- if a person is subject to reporting obligations under *the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004* or *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003*;
- disciplinary information held by certain professional organisations including teachers, child care licensees and foster carers; and
- information that the Police Commissioner may provide in relation to police investigations into allegations of serious child-related sexual offences, even if no charges were laid.

Applicants may return criminal history as part of the blue card check, however, not every instance impacts a person's ability to be issued a blue card. A list of the disqualifying offences can be found at www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/disqualifying-offences.

All blue card applicants and card holders' criminal records are monitored daily by the Queensland Police so Blue Card Services can take action, including suspending or cancelling a Blue Card which prohibits the person from working with children, if there is a relevant change in a person's criminal history.

Implementation of the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system* report.

The government broadly supports the intent of all 81 recommendations of the *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system* report (the report).

The report found our current system was one of the strongest in the country, however made recommendations to make it even stronger.

A reference group comprised of key government agencies and non-government agencies has been formed to oversee the implementation of the blue card reforms.

A detailed implementation plan is being developed in consultation with stakeholders to provide a roadmap for implementing the reforms prioritising the need to streamline the system and build cultural capability within the system to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Work has been completed to introduce an online service to allow blue card applicants to partially complete their applications online, application forms have been updated to better capture information regarding home-based care services and a reporting webpage was launched in late 2017 highlighting key blue card statistics.

The government has also committed to increasing safeguards for children by implementing a 'no card, no start' policy to ensure that people hold a blue card before they start working with children. This will change the current policy that allows people in paid employment to commence child-related work while their application is processing. Work has commenced on the operational and legislative changes required to implement this significant reform.

A register is also currently being developed in consultation with the Queensland Police Service, Department of Education, Office of the Public Guardian and the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women who regulate home-based care services to share relevant information identifying the blue card status of foster and kinship carers, family day educators, stand-alone care providers and adults who reside in these residences. It is anticipated that this register will be operational in early 2019 pending legislative amendments.

ENDSSpeaking points

- The Working with Children Check (also known as the blue card check) assesses a person's eligibility to hold a blue card or exemption card based on their known past police and disciplinary information. This may include conduct as both an adult and a juvenile.



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- Applicants may return criminal history as part of the blue card check, however, not every instance affects a person's ability to be issued a blue card.
- All blue card applicants and card holders' criminal records are monitored daily by the Queensland Police so Blue Card Services can take action, including suspending or cancelling a Blue Card which prohibits the person from working with children, if there is a relevant change in a person's criminal history.

Implementation of following *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system* report – QFCC Blue Card review

- The report found our current system was one of the strongest in the country, however made recommendations to make it even stronger.
- The 81 recommendations from the Blue Card Review Report are broad and will take time to fully implement. Implementation of the recommendations will occur through a phased approach across years.
- A reference group comprised of key government agencies and non-government agencies has been formed to oversee the implementation of the blue card reforms.
- A detailed implementation plan is being developed in consultation with stakeholders to provide a roadmap for implementing the reforms prioritising the need to streamline the system and build cultural capability within the system to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- Work has been completed to introduce an online service to allow blue card applicants to partially complete their applications online, application forms have been updated to better capture information regarding home-based care services and a reporting webpage was launched in late 2017 highlighting key blue card statistics.
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ENDS