

Working with Children Checks: Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (**the Royal Commission**) has made a number of recommendations which will be considered by Federal and State governments with regards to Working with Children Checks (**WWCCs**). The Royal Commission has recommended a national model for WWCCs which would introduce consistent standards for establishing a centralised WWCC database to facilitate cross-border information sharing.

The WWCC scheme was first introduced into New South Wales in 2000. Each jurisdiction within Australia has since established its own WWCC regime.

The Royal Commission acknowledges that whilst WWCCs are only one strategy required by organisations to ensure the safety of children, that these checks are a useful tool in detecting people who have previously been reported to/come to the attention of authorities, for offending against children and otherwise posing a danger.

Problems with the Current System

With a view to ensuring greater consistency and integration, a number of changes have been proposed. These changes aim to avoid problems identified by the Royal Commission; which include:

- Each scheme defines **who needs a check differently**.
- With the exception of criminal history, there is **no mechanism to share information** between jurisdictions for the purpose of assessing applications.
- At present, **people with adverse records in one jurisdiction may be able to obtain a clearance in another** where such adverse records are not accessible
- Continuous monitoring does not include monitoring of **national criminal history** records.



Recommendations

The Royal Commission has recommended:

- Governments require all **religious leaders and officers or personnel of religious** organisations have WWCCs.
- People convicted of certain serious offences against children be **denied the right to appeal against adverse WWCC decisions**, in certain circumstances.
- There be **no conditions on WWCCs** – for example, supervision or role-based clearances, that is, the person is either cleared or not cleared for child-related work.

In the event the recommendations are accepted, organisations will need to review their current practices for new employees/volunteers and give consideration as to whether WWCC for existing staff need to be re-visited.

Further information on the proposed changes to Working with Children Checks can be obtained from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse via its website <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au>

Rosan Santangelo
T: +61 (0) 2 9376 1144
F: +61 (0) 2 9376 1111
M: 0405 640 654
rosan.santangelo@hbalegal.com
www.hbalegal.com

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