

MEDIA RELEASE

National approach needed for Working With Children Checks: Truth Justice and Healing Council



13 August 2013

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, has called for a national approach to screening people who work with children in order to provide better protection for vulnerable children.

Mr Sullivan made the call as the Council lodged its submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's first issues paper: Working With Children Checks.

"The Working With Children Check is one important part of a comprehensive system needed to provide a safe environment for children and there should be no exemptions," Mr Sullivan said.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council suggests that a national approach overseen by a regulatory body would:

- provide greater transparency and consistency across jurisdictions
- help close loopholes that currently pose a threat to the safety of children
- enable the sharing of intelligence across jurisdictions
- ensure continuous monitoring of relevant records across jurisdictions
- provide greater 'portability' for workers, enabling them to travel from state to state
- limit the burdensome red tape that currently exists for workers travelling across states and territories.

"The national protocols would include the best features from State, Territory and overseas experience. They would apply to the adults living in the homes of children in out-of-home care, to parent volunteers and to all workers in child-related workplaces," Mr Sullivan said.

"The welfare and safety of children is paramount and we must take all possible steps to ensure the adults working with them have been through rigorous checks.

"A national Working With Children Check must be simple and cost effective, so as not to dissuade people who might otherwise volunteer or depend on volunteers.

"Criminal records should of course be checked, along with employment and other disciplinary proceedings regarding behaviour that may cause harm to children. Juvenile records relating to serious offences should also be included," Mr Sullivan said.

The Catholic Church is the largest private employer in Australia and is a major provider of social, health and education services nationally. Throughout Australia, the Church engages directly with children through parish, liturgical, education, health, welfare and disability services, and a range of other child-related activities.

Church organisations have long engaged in child protection initiatives and the development of child protection systems in Australia. Through its constituent bodies the Council is well placed to draw on the Church's national experience to provide insights into how current WWCC legislation and procedures are working in practice.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council was established by the Catholic Church to coordinate the Church's response to the Royal Commission. Its role is to oversee the Church's engagement with the Commission, to develop new policies to protect young people and to ensure the Church responds to any future complaints appropriately and with justice, putting the needs of victims first.

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Read the entire submission:

<http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/media/35631/120813-FINAL-SUBMISSION-Issues- Paper-No-1-WWCC.pdf>

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For more information on the Royal Commission go to:

<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>
