

POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGES ARISING FROM CHANGES IN WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK REQUIREMENTS

The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 requires all employees, volunteers and clergy and other like religious leaders within the Diocese of Newcastle to complete a working with children check if they are involved in direct physical or face-to-face contact with people under the age of 18. The new arrangements come into effect from 15 June 2013.

From that date, the Working with children Check involves a two stage application process in which a person completes an online form and then goes to a designated centre (such as the RTA) to be identified. The application is then processed. Successful applications receive a WWCC number.

No application under the existing procedures will be processed by the Diocese after 27 May 2013 as they will not meet the deadlines set by the Commissioner.

Under the phase-in guidelines ministers of religion (or people in like roles) must complete the new check by 31 December 2013. As Bishop Administrator, I have determined that the following ministries undertake a spiritual leadership role and must comply with this phase-in guideline.

- All clergy are regarded as they are involved involved or may in the conduct of their ministry be involved in direct face-to-face contact with people under the age of 18.
- All lay liturgical assistants and authorised preachers as they are involved or have the capacity to be involved with direct face-to-face contact with people under the age of 18.
- All SRE teachers as they have direct face-to-face contact with children.
- All paid or voluntary workers in children and youth programs as they have direct face-to-face contact with children.

I have determined that people assisting with the administration of the chalice should not be included as people undertaking a spiritual leadership role.

I have further determined that where a licence, authority or permission from the Bishop is issued it will be issued directly to the person undertaking the ministry and a copy forwarded to the Incumbent of the Parish. Currently a number of authorities are issued to the Incumbent rather than the person.

The Working With Children Check arrangements provide that parents volunteering with their own children are not required to have a working with children check unless the volunteering is part of a formal mentoring program or which involves intimate personal care of children with a disability. People aged under 18 are not required to complete the check.

Either at the Diocesan or Parish level we must have a record of the Working with Children Check Number and confirmation that we have reviewed the Working with Children Check Database.

At a Diocesan level we should have this information for all of the following ministries –

- All clergy
- All members of a Ministry Team
- All licensed liturgical assistants and authorised preachers
- All remunerated children and youth workers and all volunteer children and youth workers working more than 7.5 hours each week
- All SRE teachers

The Parish must have a record for all of the above categories and a record for any person volunteering in children's activities (aged over 18) who is not volunteering in activity with their own children. **These details must be recorded in a new DELEGATED AUTHORITY REGISTER.**

As Bishop Administrator I have determined that **the licence, permission and other authority of people undertaking a spiritual leadership role will be suspended automatically from 15 January 2014 if the Diocese and Parish do not have a record of the person's working with children check number.** On 16 January 2014, the Diocesan Business Manager as Bishop's Registrar will advise all people who have not complied with the requirement to lodge the check number that the suspension has taken affect.

Given the changes to the Working with Children Check and the extensive data base I believe that from 15 June it should no longer be a requirement that a person provides a National Police Certificate every three years.

We continue to have expectations around people completing Safer Church Training Authority Training. I recommend that all people required to lodge a WWC Check Number with the Diocese are required when they first lodge their number to have completed within the previous three years SCTA training. Further I recommend that our policy from here should be that from 1 January 2014 every person required to lodge a WWC Check Number must once in every five year period complete –

- SCTA refresher training or equivalent
- Seminar on Faithfulness in Service (these will be introduced in 2014)
- Seminar on maintaining professional relationships (these will be introduced in 2014)

It is important to recognise that the Bishop or the Professional Standards Director may determine that additional material is required for any existing SRE teacher or licence holder and request them to complete any authorised Ministry Clearance Form and/or provide a National Police Certificate. The Professional Standards Director may check the National Register from time to time for any teaching SRE or currently serving with licence, permission or authority from the Bishop.

New Licences, Authorities and Permissions

It is proposed that where a person is not currently in ministry in the Diocese applies for a licence, permission or authority as a member of the clergy, lay liturgical assistant, authorised preacher, or children and youth worker (either remunerated or working more than 7.5 hours per week) they must provide the following -

- National Police Check Certificate
- Complete any authorised Ministry Clearance Form

- Provide a copy of their letters of orders and previous licence (if a member of the clergy)
- Statement of good standing from their previous Diocese (if a member of the clergy)

All applications for licence, permission or authority must be forwarded to the Bishop in an envelope marked confidential. It will be opened by the Bishop or a person delegated by the Bishop.

They must apply promptly for a working with children check and forward the number as soon as it is received.

They must within six months of receiving a licence or authority complete SCTA initial training (unless they have equivalent training in another Diocese) and within 12 months complete the seminar on Faithfulness in Service and the seminar on maintaining professional relationships (unless they have equivalent training in another Diocese). They must complete the SCTA refresher training, faithfulness in service and professional relationships training once every five years.

All applications from people new to ministry in the Diocese will be subject to a National Register Check – that is a check of professional standards matters from the database held by the General Synod Office.

Recommendation

The Diocesan Council supports the determinations made by the Bishop Administrator and confirms as Diocesan Policy the positions set out in this paper.