

Response to Issues Paper 1:

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK

Background:

The Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service has provided a range of crisis and long term counselling and medical services to victims of sexual assault for the past 30 years.

A high proportion of the victims we see are 'vulnerable adults'. These adults have a range of disabilities such as cognitive impairment, cognitive decline and mental illness.

The prevalence of sexual abuse of these people is significantly higher than the general population.¹

The perpetrators are frequently people in positions as carers, professionals and volunteers involved in the care needs of the person with a disability.²

“Sexual offenders are attracted by vulnerability and availability, rather than by physical attributes of potential victims” (Groth 1979)

Recommendation:

That the Royal Commission consider extending the Working with Children Check to include a broader range of vulnerable adults as well.

Such a '**Working with Vulnerable Persons Check**' has been operational in the UK for some years now.³

It goes some way to addressing the important issue of serial sex offenders gravitating to work with vulnerable adults as well as children.

¹ Blyth,J Myalla: Responding to People with Intellectual Disabilities who have been Sexually Assaulted' 2002 Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service NSW health

² Sobsey,D Violence & Abuse in the Lives of People with a Disability 1994

³ **No Secrets: guidance on protecting vulnerable adults in care - Gov.UK**
<https://www.gov.uk/.../no-secrets-guidance-on-protecting-vulnerable-adu...>