

Dear Commissioners,

As an educator and researcher, I wholeheartedly support a single national WWCC. As it stands, the present system is cumbersome and expensive if educators want to move interstate or conduct research in different states. Yet as research purports to represent the Australian population, it is important to minimise barriers to data collection in different parts of Australia. Similarly, as USQ operates a fully online education course with enrollments around Australia as well as overseas, it would make the situation for pre-service teachers in different states much clearer.

This is particularly pertinent for Masters and PhD students who wish to conduct research in different states but who are not necessarily registered teachers in any one state and thus exempt. It can be difficult even as a full time tertiary educator to accrue sufficient teaching hours to qualify for teacher registration; impossible for a full time student. This was my recent experience prior to settling in Queensland. During my research, several school Principals, particularly those in outback schools, commented that they wished there was one national check so they could be assured that teachers from any state could be safely hired. They also felt that for researchers who would not be left alone with children they were interviewing, having to obtain a check in each state was an unnecessary burden, whereas one check would alleviate that requirement.

I am presently writing a book chapter looking at mainstreams and margins, noting that too often, research only covers small parts of mainstream Australia, ignoring the 1/3 of the population that lives outside of the capital cities, and also ignoring the differences that exist between capital cities. The different WWCCs are just one of the barriers raised in this chapter, and in it, I call for a national system. I will amend this chapter to say that this is at least under consideration, a great step forward!

I don't have a lot of specific information to offer concerning the details of the check. However, I do feel that it should be at the thorough end of what is currently done in different states, i.e. to bring all states up to best practice. It has concerned me that without data being both searched and held at a national level, offenders could easily move interstate and obtain a check that does not take into account former inappropriate behaviours. My thoughts are that 3 years would be an appropriate time for a clearance to last. Given that, sadly, some horrendous offences are committed by juvenile offenders, I would support the checking of juvenile records as safety for children is the paramount concern. That said, such a finding should be balanced by subsequent data - if that offence occurred years ago and the person has not shown any signs of re-offending, then this should not automatically eliminate them from obtaining a WWCC.

One thing that is definitely needed is great clarity as to who needs to obtain a WWCC and who does not. I found my way to this Issue Paper (and consequently to making this submission) as I went to check the Blue Card requirements for my partner. He belongs to a recreational club (Remote control car racing), and a recent forum post from an affiliated club raised the issue of parents needing a blue card if they bring children that are not their own (e.g. their children's friends) to events, either to observe or participate. In my reading of the requirements in Queensland that is not necessary, as their own children are participating and also there would not be opportunity for adults to be alone with children. But this does indicate a level of confusion in the community, so wording and examples needs to be very clear. That said, having looked at the regulations for other states, Queensland's is one of the clearer statements, although the categories of people under which to search are a bit limited and therefore confusing.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I am quite happy for my submission to be public, though note that this is my personal view and does not necessarily represent the official views of the University of Southern Queensland.

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