



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

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Committee Secretary
Health, Communities, Disability Services
and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Committee Secretary

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is pleased to provide feedback to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee on the Disability Services and Other Legislation (Worker Screening) Amendment Bill 2018 (the Bill).

The QFCC supports the intent of the Bill to enable Queensland to participate in national information sharing obligations for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) worker screening under the National Disability Insurance Scheme Quality and Safeguards Framework and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Nationally Consistent Worker Screening and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The QFCC also notes one of the Bill's key objectives is to enable Queensland to exchange expanded criminal history information with worker screening units in other jurisdictions. This will be done for the purposes of NDIS worker screening by expanding the existing framework in place for the purposes of working with children checks (WWCCs).

In September 2017, the QFCC released its report related to the review of the blue card system. This report followed a request from the Premier to undertake a whole of system review of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (WWC Act), which includes Queensland's WWCC.

The blue card system and the proposed NDIS worker screening process are two of the many systems in Queensland that gather information to assess a person's eligibility or suitability to engage in particular work. The NDIS worker screening process also gathers information to assess the suitability of people who may also require a WWCC.

To make the right decision about a person's suitability for a specific role, agencies and assessors must have access to all relevant information. The QFCC identified barriers to sharing information between screening systems can lead to duplication of screening and create inconsistent and fragmented decision-making. If inconsistent decisions are made across regulatory bodies (such as the NDIS worker screening and the blue card system) public confidence in the systems may be negatively impacted.

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Stakeholders identified during consultation for the review of the blue card system that the interaction between the yellow card and the blue card systems is complex, particularly in relation to the changes occurring under the NDIS. Stakeholders also agreed that information held by different government agencies should be able to be shared to inform the various screening processes operated by government.

As part of the review of the blue card system, the QFCC made a number of recommendations to improve information sharing for the purposes of assessing and managing risks of harm to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children. Specifically, the WWC Act needs new information sharing provisions to allow relevant agencies to exchange information for other purposes of a WWCC or other screening processes.

Allowing information relevant to a WWCC and NDIS worker screening to be shared would facilitate consistent decision-making across regulatory bodies and would maximise public confidence in the systems. Improving information sharing will also assist reduce the likelihood of fragmented decision-making across government agencies.

In implementing the NDIS worker screening process in Queensland, the QFCC recommends the Committee note the issues identified in the report related to gathering and sharing information for the purposes of assessing a person's eligibility or suitability for certain activities. Consideration should also be given to the recommendations made in the report relevant to improving information sharing.

If you or your officers have any queries in relation to this matter, they may contact Zara Berkovits, Manager, Policy and Advocacy Leadership on 3900 6019 or email Zara.Berkovits@qfcc.qld.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Vardon
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission