



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

Working with Children Check Protocol

This protocol contains information for parishes, agencies and entities to support the undertaking of Working with Children (WWC) check requirements for Church personnel. Here you will find practical guidance, information and resources to assist with the application, renewal and management of WWC checks.

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO THE FOLLOWING CAPABILITY AREA

3 Right people, right role, right knowledge



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Introduction

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne acknowledges that the requirement for applying for a Victorian WWC check for all Church personnel is only one component of a comprehensive approach to child safety, to ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable. Following the completion of a WWC check, the Department of Justice and Community Safety (**DOJ**) will issue a WWC clearance. Obtaining a WWC clearance does not guarantee that a person is suitable to work with children and young people, however the process is an essential screening tool and is required by the Victorian Child Safe Standard 6.

The WWC check provides an assessment of an applicant’s criminal records and any other professional conduct findings to determine whether the applicant poses an unjustifiable risk in relation to child-related work.

The WWC check excludes persons from working with children and young people on the basis of their involvement in:

- serious sexual offences
- serious violent offences
- serious drug offences.

Throughout the duration of the WWC check, a person’s criminal record will be monitored in relation to these relevant offences and professional conduct findings in Victoria.

Church personnel in parish, agency and entity roles represent the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and hold a position of trust in our communities, irrespective of whether their role involves direct, indirect or no contact with children and young people. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that all Church personnel have been appropriately screened, including through the WWC check process.

All Church personnel, whether appointed in a paid or voluntary capacity, are required to obtain a satisfactory WWC check, subject to the exemptions listed below.

The WWC check requirements of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne exceed the requirements of the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) (**Act**). The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's approach to WWC checks ensures that we all stand united in creating safe environments for children and young people, and demonstrates the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's commitment to ensuring that only people who are suitable to work with children and young people have a role within the Archdiocese, and persons who pose a risk to children and young people are excluded pursuant to our zero tolerance approach to child abuse and harm.

WWC check requirement for Church personnel

All Church personnel over the age of 18 are required to obtain a WWC check and maintain a current WWC clearance.

The Archdiocese requires all Church personnel who do not have a current WWC clearance to apply for a WWC check before commencement and to provide an application receipt as evidence that they have applied for a WWC check. Clergy and employees of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne must have the Archdiocese registered on their WWC check. Volunteers must have the relevant parish, agency or entity registered on their WWC check.

A WWC check application can be completed online or commenced online and finalised at a participating Australia Post Office. For further information on applying for a WWC check go to <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply#Complete online application>

Please note:

Photo ID is required to complete the WWC check application. If an applicant does not have photo ID it is recommended they apply for a Proof of Age Card. Further information on obtaining a Proof of Age Card can be found at this link <https://service.vic.gov.au/find-services/personal/apply-for-a-proof-of-age-card>.

Following a Proof of Age card being issued, Church personnel can use the Proof of Age Card for a Keypass ID application. This can be done through Australia Post at <https://auspost.com.au/id-and-document-services/apply-for-a-keypass-id#tab2>. This is recognised as a primary form of photo identification that meets the WWC check application requirements.

Most people can work once their application for a WWC check has been lodged and a determination is pending. However, as a requirement of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, all Church personnel who are engaged directly with children and young people are **not** permitted to work or volunteer with children and young people while their application is being processed.

Duration and cost of a WWC clearance

A WWC clearance is valid for 5 years. Church personnel are responsible for maintaining a valid and current WWC clearance.

An employee WWC check requires payment of a fee. An employee WWC clearance is valid for both paid and volunteer work.

A volunteer WWC check is free. A volunteer WWC clearance is only valid for volunteer work. It is an offence to engage in paid child-related work with just a volunteer check.

The Safeguarding Unit will liaise with Corpus Christi College and will keep a record of seminarians' WWC checks that must be registered across both the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and the seminary.

The Safeguarding Unit, in consultation with the Vicar General's Office will coordinate and keep records of WWC checks for Archdiocesan Clergy.

Information in languages other than English

Please see the WWC check website which is currently being updated

<https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

If an information sheet is not available in a community language, the person can contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50 and request that they call the Working with Children Check support line on 1300 652 879 (local call charge).

Services are also available for those with speech, hearing impairment or deafness (TTY) through the National Relay Service (NRS):

NRS contact details

- TTY/voice calls: 133 677
- speak and listen: 1300 555 727
- website: [About the National Relay Service \(NRS\) | Access Hub](#)

Further information about obtaining a WWC check can be found at:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-wwcc>

1300 652 879

Requirement to register involvement with parishes, agencies or entities

Church personnel must register and/or update their involvement with the parish, agency or entity within 21 days of their commencement, through the Working with Children Check Victoria website: <https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

Church personnel must notify the DOJ of the name, address and telephone number of each organisation with whom the person will be engaged in work and/or volunteering. Failing to notify of a change in organisation/s is an offence under the Act.

This will enable the parish, agency or entity to be notified if there is a change in the status of the person's WWC check (e.g. suspension, withdrawal due to relevant charges or convictions).

Requirement to update WWC check details

Church personnel are required to keep all WWC check details up to date, including:

- name
- date of birth
- residential address
- telephone numbers
- contact details of organisations they are engaged with (e.g. employment, voluntary work).

WWC check details can be updated through the Working with Children Check website:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

Requirement to notify of change to circumstances

A holder of a WWC clearance or applicant for WWC check must notify the DOJ and the parish, agency or entity of relevant changes in circumstances as required by the Act, including:

- the person being charged with a WWC Category A offence or a WWC Category B offence
- the person being convicted or found guilty of a WWC Category A offence or a WWC Category B offence or the charge being otherwise finally dealt with
- the person becoming subject to reporting obligations imposed by Part 3 of the *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 (Vic)*
- the person becoming subject to a supervision order, a detention order or an emergency detention order
- a relevant disciplinary or regulatory finding being made in relation to the person;
- the person being given a NDIS exclusion
- the person being excluded from child-related work under a corresponding working with children law.

Requirement to notify of change in WWC check status

In circumstances where the:

- person has been issued with an interim WWC exclusion (formerly known as an Interim Negative Notice) as part of the application process, or
- a person's WWC clearance has expired, been suspended or withdrawn through the issue of a WWC exclusion (formerly known as a Negative Notice).

The person must notify the parish, agency or entity immediately and cease to engage in ministry, paid or voluntary work.

Parishes, agencies and entities that are notified or become aware of changes in the status of the WWC clearance (e.g. expiry, suspension or withdrawal) must act to ensure that the person does not engage in work.

If a person declines to apply for or provide a WWC check

If a person declines to apply for or provide a WWC check, they are not permitted to engage in any work or undertake any voluntary role within the Archdiocese. The Safeguarding Unit should be contacted for further advice where a person has declined to meet the WWC check requirements.

Church personnel considerations

Parents/carers working or volunteering in an activity in which their child usually participates

In our efforts to strengthen child safety, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne requires parents/carers who work or volunteer in an activity in which their child usually participates to undertake a WWC check, despite exemptions existing in the Act. Church personnel hold a position of power and authority, and all steps must be taken to ensure that persons interacting with children and young people are screened to ensure that they do not pose a risk.

Victorian Institute of Teaching registration and the WWC check

A teacher who holds a current registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is exempt from the requirements to undertake a WWC check. However, effective from the 1st of September 2019, the VIT requires registered teachers to nominate organisations in which they undertake other paid or volunteer work, to the DOJ. The DOJ will send the parish, agency or entity confirmation that the teacher has nominated the organisation. This will ensure that the VIT is able to alert organisations if the teacher's registration has been suspended or cancelled.

More information on this topic from VIT can be found at:

<https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-teacher-information>

The link for teachers to notify Working with Children Check Victoria of any other child-related work: <https://service.vic.gov.au/services/teachers-notifications/>

Police and the WWC check

Serving members of Victoria Police, Protective Service Officers and the Australian Federal Police are exempt from the WWC check requirement under the Act.

However, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne requires all members of Victoria Police, Protective Service Officers and Australian Federal Police to obtain a WWC check and nominate the parish, agency or entity as the volunteering body. This will ensure that the parish, agency or entity is notified if the WWC clearance is suspended and/or withdrawn.

WWC check requirements for contractors, community programs auspiced by external providers using parish and Archdiocesan facilities

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Policy sets out responsibilities in relation to WWC checks for:

- community programs auspiced by external agencies;
- external providers who use parish and Archdiocesan facilities;
- contractors who may be engaged to provide specific goods or services.

Working with Children check register

Archdiocesan parishes, agencies and entities must maintain a Working with Children (**WWC**) **check register** and ensure that WWC checks for Church personnel are appropriate to their role (e.g. volunteer or employment), current and linked to the parish, agency or entity i.e. the person has registered their involvement with the parish.

The following minimum requirements must be recorded on the WWC check register:

- name of the member of clergy, employee or volunteer
- role title(s)
- whether the role is a voluntary or employee role
- whether an exemption applies and an explanation of why an exemption applies e.g. volunteer under the age of 18
- application receipt number (for those applying for a check)
- WWC check number
- card sighted column – for a signature of the person sighting the card
- expiry date
- currency/validity check through Working with Children Check website
- parish, agency or entity involvement has been registered.

Parishes, agencies and entities are required to check the status of WWC checks through the Working with Children Check website to ensure that the person has applied for a WWC check or to confirm that the person has a current WWC clearance.

The Check Status function on the Working with Children Check website enables organisations to check the status, type and expiry date of a person's card or application: <https://online.justice.vic.gov.au/wwccu/checkstatus.doj>

Alternatively, a status checker spreadsheet in which you can check and record the status of multiple applications or WWC checks can be found here: [RecordKeepingSheet.pdf \(content.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Obligations of parishes, agencies and entities when a WWC check is suspended or withdrawn

If a person (Church personnel or applicant for a position) receives an interim WWC exclusion (formerly known as an Interim Negative Notice) upon application for a WWC check, or a WWC exclusion (formerly known as a Negative Notice) when holding a WWC clearance, the parish, agency or entity will be notified if the parish, agency or entity is listed with the Working with Children Check Unit, Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Church personnel have an obligation to inform the parish, agency or entity that they work or volunteer with, within 7 days of the receipt of an interim WWC exclusion or a WWC exclusion.

The parish, agency or entity must ensure that:

- they consult with the Safeguarding Unit on this matter
- the person is suspended from their role until they can demonstrate that a WWC clearance has been issued or reinstated
- the person does not have contact and/or work with children and young people involved in parish, agency or entity programs, activities or events
- the Interim WWC exclusion or WWC exclusion is recorded on the parish, agency or entity's WWC register
- if deemed necessary, the person will be placed on a safety plan to mitigate risk of harm in consultation with the Safeguarding Unit.

Exemptions

There are some circumstances where a WWC check is not required by the Act. Given the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne exceeds its child safeguarding obligations, with respect to its WWC check obligations, the Archdiocese has determined that there are limited circumstances in which a WWC check is not required as follows:

- children (under 18 years of age)
- a visiting member of clergy who is not ordinarily a resident in Victoria:
 - if the period during which they engage in that work is not more than 30 days within the same calendar year, **and**
 - they do not engage in *any* other child-related work in Victoria within the same calendar year.

Please note that all clergy are subject to screening and background checks as part of the Safeguarding Children and Young People Framework requirements and this process is maintained by the Vicar General's Office.

Short-term volunteering

Volunteers can engage in short-term volunteering in low-risk roles, for a period of up to 5 days in the same calendar year within a Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne parish, agency or entity e.g. collectors. Parishes, agencies and entities are required to undertake a risk assessment to evaluate the possible risks associated with short-term roles to determine WWC check (and/or National Police Check) requirements and strategies to reduce risk to children and young people. Any child-related work, in addition to high-risk activities such as home visiting, overnight stays, camps and overseas trips, will require a WWC check and criminal history record check. The Safeguarding Unit can assist in determining your approach to short-term volunteering or roles.

For international and interstate visitors, it is highly recommended that they must not exceed the short-term volunteering period of 5 days and must not volunteer in any child-related work or high-risk activities. If this was to occur, the individual will need to provide a valid International Police Check or the equivalent of a WWC clearance obtained under a corresponding working with children law from their home State/Territory to the parish, agency or entity.

ATTACHMENT 1 – SAMPLE WWC CHECK APPLICATION AND RENEWAL LETTERS

Applying for a WWC check – sample letter

Dear [insert name]

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Policy of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne requires that all Church personnel (including clergy, employees and volunteers) have a current Working with Children (WWC) check.

All Church personnel over the age of 18 (unless exempt as per the *WWC Check Protocol*) are required to obtain a satisfactory WWC check, register the WWC check with the parish and maintain a current WWC clearance throughout their involvement in parishes, agencies and entities.

Clergy, employees and volunteers appointed in parish, agency or entity roles, represent the Archdiocese and hold a position of trust in our communities, irrespective of whether their role involves direct, indirect or no contact with children and young people.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's approach to Working with Children (WWC) checks ensures that we all stand united in creating safe environments for children and young people, and demonstrates our commitment to excluding persons who pose an obvious risk to children and young people.

All Church personnel who are engaged directly with children and young people are not permitted to work or volunteer with children and young people while their application is being processed. Engaging in child related work without a current WWC check, is an offence as per the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)* (**Act**) and the *Working with Children Regulations 2021 (Vic)* (**Regulations**) and may incur a penalty of \$39,652.80 or two years imprisonment or both, with significant penalties to the organisation.

How to apply for a Working with Children (WWC) check

A WWC check application can be completed:

1. Online using the Service Victoria portal
https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/individuals/applicants/how-to-apply#Complete_online_application, or
2. Can be commenced online and finalised at a participating Australia Post Office.
<https://www.vic.gov.au/how-apply>

Please provide a copy of an application receipt as evidence that you have applied for a WWC check.

A volunteer WWC check is only valid for volunteer work and is free. A WWC check is valid for 5 years.

When applying for your WWC check, please ensure that [insert name of parish] is recorded as one of the organisations for which you undertake ministry. This will ensure the WWC check protocols are met, and the parish receives a copy of your application.

To do this, on the WWC check website, click on the **‘update your details’** section and follow the prompts to add the parish as an organisation to which you are engaged.

[Insert here Parish name, address and phone number]

Helpline

Should you require assistance through the application process, you can contact the WWC check customer support line on 1300 652 879 or via the website <https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-wwcc>

Please do not hesitate to contact the parish office if you have any enquiries or require any further assistance.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Request to renew a WWC check – sample letter

Dear [insert name]

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Policy of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne requires that all Church personnel have a current Working with Children (WWC) check.

This is a reminder that your Working with Children (WWC) check is due to expire on [insert expiry date].

It is a requirement that Church personnel who do not have a current WWC clearance, apply for a WWC check before continuing in their role and provide an application receipt as evidence that they have applied for a renewed WWC check. All Church personnel who are engaged directly with children and young people are not permitted to work or volunteer with children and young people while their renewal application is being processed.

Renewals are processed entirely online, through the Working with Children Check website and Service Victoria portal: <https://www.vic.gov.au/working-with-children-check>

When renewing your WWC check, please ensure that [insert name of parish] is recorded as one of the organisations for which you undertake ministry. This will ensure the WWC check protocols are met, and the parish receives a copy of your application.

To do this, on the WWC check website, click on the **‘update your details’** section and follow the prompts to add the parish as an organisation to which you are engaged.

[Insert here Parish name, address and phone number]

Helpline

Should you require assistance through the application process, you can contact the WWC check customer support line on 1300 652 879 or via the website

<https://www.vic.gov.au/contact-wwcc>

Please do not hesitate to contact the parish office if you have any enquiries or require any further assistance.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

ATTACHMENT 2 – WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK PARISH RESOURCE

This resource has been created to help parishes assist their personnel who need to apply for a volunteer WWC check. The resource outlines what identification and other items are required for the volunteer WWC check online application. It also functions as an invitation from the parish to their personnel to complete the application at the parish office with their assistance.

To access this resource please refer to Safeguarding Unit's Sharepoint site, section [Capability Area 3 – Right people, right role, right knowledge](#).

HOW TO USE

This resource is available in an A5 or A6 size as it is designed to be small and compact, allowing it to be easily handed out or sent via email to those personnel who may need it.

Before sharing the resource with your personnel and inviting them into your parish office to help with the application process, please read through the resource and make sure your parish is able to provide the assistance offered.

A reminder that whoever is assisting the personnel to complete their application may be dealing with sensitive information such as identification documents and passwords. Please respect the privacy of those you are assisting in accordance with the [Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Privacy Policy](#).

While it is easier to complete the WWC check application online, some may want to complete it in-person. If this is the case, and you want to provide some guidance, the following Victorian Government website page, details what is required from them.

[In-person applications for Working with Children Checks | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#)

Working With Children (WWC) check

Online application and renewal

Thank you for helping the parish to flourish!

A few things to note before checking what you need to bring to register for a WWC check online.

1. At least one of the documents you provide must be photo identification (e.g. driver's licence). Suitable identification options are listed on the back of this resource.
2. The names on your documents must match.
3. A smartphone is required to confirm the authenticity of your identification documents. If you do not have a smartphone, the parish can provide one.
4. If you do not have the required documents, you can complete the WWC check application at a post office by following the steps at wwwcv.auspost.com.au

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Online application and renewal

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1. At least one of the documents you provide must be photo identification (e.g. driver's licence). Suitable identification options are listed on the back of this resource.
2. The names on your documents must match.
3. A smartphone is required to confirm the authenticity of your identification documents. If you do not have a smartphone, the parish can provide one.
4. If you do not have the required documents, you can complete the WWC check application at a post office by following the steps at wwwcv.auspost.com.au

Please bring:

1. A Service Victoria account and an email

If you don't have a Service Victoria account or an email the parish can help you create one.

2. Type 1 identification document

One of the following:

- Australian passport (current or expired for less than 3 years)
- Current foreign passport (with linked visa)
- Australian birth certificate
- Australian citizen certificate
- ImmiCard

3. Type 2 identification document

One of the following:

- Australian passport (if not used as a type 1 identification)
- Current Australian driver's license or learner's permit
- Medicare card

Please bring:

1. A Service Victoria account and an email

If you don't have a Service Victoria account or an email the parish can help you create one.

2. Type 1 identification document

One of the following:

- Australian passport (current or expired for less than 3 years)
- Current foreign passport (with linked visa)
- Australian birth certificate
- Australian citizen certificate
- ImmiCard

3. Type 2 identification document

One of the following:

- Australian passport (if not used as a type 1 identification)
- Current Australian driver's license or learner's permit
- Medicare card