



TAX, STRUCTURE & COMPLIANCE

Working with Children: There's No Single National Check, Despite the Name

A clearance held in one state doesn't transfer to another. Multi-state associations need to check every jurisdiction separately

Any association running youth programs, mentoring initiatives, junior member categories, or events where minors are present needs a precise answer to a question that is considerably more complicated than it first appears: which specific working with children check applies, to which roles, and does a check held in one state actually transfer to another.

Which rules apply to your association?

The law depends on how your association is set up. A **company limited by guarantee** follows the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and its constitution. An **incorporated association** follows its state or territory associations Act and its rules. A **registered charity** also follows the ACNC Act and the ACNC Governance Standards, and some Corporations Act rules are replaced for charities that are companies. Check your own governing documents, and get advice before decisions with legal consequences.

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There Is No Single National Check, Despite The Common Name

Every Australian state and territory runs its own working with children screening scheme, and these differ in name, cost, and validity period. Queensland's version is called a Blue Card. The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania run a broader Working with Vulnerable People check covering both children and other vulnerable groups, rather than a check specific to children alone. Validity periods range between roughly two and five years depending on jurisdiction. An association operating events or programs across multiple states cannot assume a single check satisfies every jurisdiction it operates in.

The Definition Is Broader Than Most Boards Assume

Child-related work, the trigger for requiring a check, is defined more broadly than many associations expect. It generally covers any role involving face-to-face or physical contact with children, supervision or mentoring of children, service delivery to children, or a potential to build a relationship of trust with a child as part of the role's actual duties. This applies to volunteers as much as paid staff, and a role an association might informally consider low-risk, a junior member mentoring program, a youth committee liaison position, can trigger the requirement if it involves this kind of contact. A check held in one state does not generally satisfy another state's requirements. Some jurisdictions allow limited short-stay exemptions for visitors who hold an equivalent home-state check (for example, Victoria allows up to 30 days in a calendar year), but the conditions differ and must be checked for each event. An association assuming a volunteer's existing interstate clearance covers a role in a different jurisdiction is making an assumption the underlying schemes were never designed to support.

A National Reform Worth Monitoring

On 14 November 2025, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General endorsed the Agreement to Deliver National Working with Children Check Reform, aiming for improved consistency and information-sharing across jurisdictions. As at October 2026, the Australian Government reports that the mid-2026 milestones have been met, but mutual recognition of checks between jurisdictions has not yet been achieved, and an association should monitor this development directly rather than assuming immediate national uniformity has already arrived.

- Conduct a specific role-by-role assessment for every position involving contact with minors, rather than making a blanket assumption about which roles require a check.
- Confirm which specific jurisdiction's check applies for any role, and never assume an existing check from one state automatically satisfies a role in a different state or territory.
- Treat exemptions with caution, checking the specific, current rules in the relevant jurisdiction directly rather than relying on an assumption that a role is exempt.
- Consider whether an additional National Disability Insurance Scheme worker check applies for any role also touching disability-sector activity, since this can be a separate, additional requirement.
- Monitor the national reform agreement's implementation over time, given the direction toward greater consistency across jurisdictions is still being delivered rather than already complete.

Protecting children and vulnerable people matters more than any compliance technicality this article has covered, and the specific, jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction discipline this topic requires exists precisely to make that protection real rather than assumed. An association that gets the specific requirements right protects the people it serves and the volunteers and staff who serve alongside them.

This is one of the practical governance topics built into our Board Director course, alongside the papers, tools and frameworks that turn the principle into your board's actual practice. [Explore the course](#)

Annie Gibbins

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BOARDROOM ACTION WORKSHEET

Working with Children: There's No Single National Check, Despite the Name

Turn the resource into evidence, a decision and an accountable next step. Keep the completed record in your association's approved board records system.

1 What is the issue or decision?

State the governance question in one clear sentence.

2 What evidence do we already have?

Record the facts, source documents and stakeholder evidence available now.

3 What evidence is still needed?

Identify the legal, regulatory, financial, member or operational information still required.

4 What is the agreed next action?

Capture the owner, timeframe and how the matter will return to the board.

Action owner	Review date	Board decision or resolution

General education, not legal, financial, tax, clinical or governance advice. Confirm specifics at the relevant primary source or with your own qualified adviser. Nexus Leadership is operated by Lipstick Consulting Pty Ltd · ABN 15 619 120 482.

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