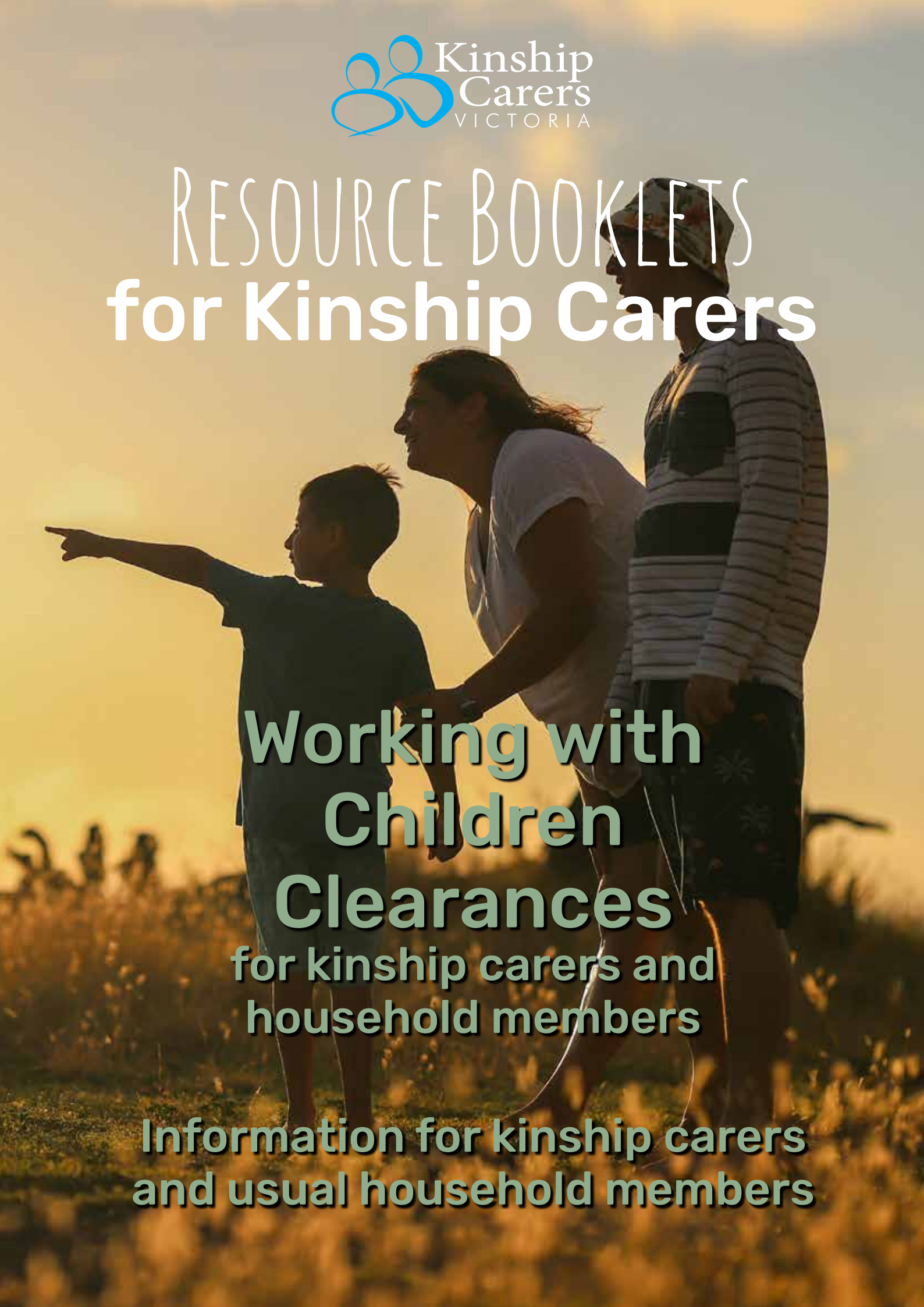
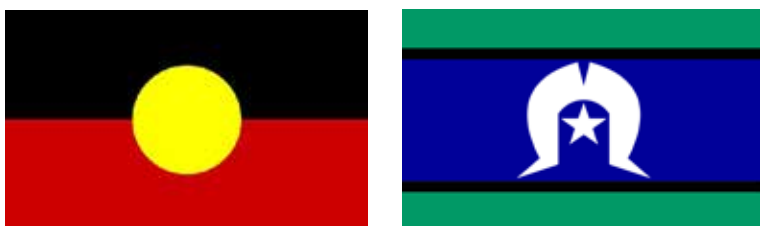


RESOURCE BOOKLETS for Kinship Carers



**Working with
Children
Clearances**
for kinship carers and
household members

**Information for kinship carers
and usual household members**



GPV/KCV acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners of our great land and offers respect to Elders, past and present.

GPV/KCV acknowledges that the Aboriginal culture existed in Australia before European settlement and consisted of many community groups. Further, we acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this land as the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

GPV/KCV acknowledges that laws and policies of the past have inflicted grief and suffering on our fellow Australians and regrets the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

GPV/KCV believes that a society that is inclusive of all is crucial to individual and community wellbeing and will behave with respect towards all irrespective of their race, religion, sexuality, gender or socio-economic background.

GPV/KCV acknowledges 13th of February as National Apology Day, the anniversary of then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, delivering the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in 2008. GPV/KCV will take steps that promote a happier and healthier future for Indigenous Australians, particularly the children and young people.

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Key words which influence GPV/KCV approaches are: Truthfulness, Confidentiality, Inclusiveness, Integrity, Constancy, Gratitude, Commitment, Compassion

Kinship Carers Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian government.



Families,
Fairness
and Housing

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 6 |
| Who is this resource booklet for? | 7 |
| What is a Working with Children Clearance? | 7 |
| When should I apply for a WWCC? | 8 |
| What happens if I, as a kinship carer, do not apply for a WWCC? | 9 |
| Aboriginal carers | 9 |
| What is a 'usual household member'? | 10 |
| Is there a cost to apply for a WWCC? | 10 |
| How do I apply? | 11 |
| New applicants | 11 |
| Organisation details for WWCC or updating details | 12 |
| I already have a Working with Children Clearance – what do I need to do? | 12 |
| What if I don't have a computer? | 13 |
| I live interstate and the child(ren) will stay with me – am I still required to apply for a WWCC? | 13 |
| I am a Victoria Police Officer or a teacher registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching – am I required to apply for a WWCC? | 14 |
| What if I have a past criminal record? | 14 |
| What if I don't have a birth certificate or other documents to confirm my identity? | 15 |
| What if my Working with Children Clearance is not granted or I am issued a notice from the Department of Government Services? | 15 |
| What should I do if my circumstances change, for example, I have a new partner, or a person moves into my home? | 16 |
| Who can help me if I am having trouble with the process? | 16 |
| More information | 17 |



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<https://kinshipcarersvictoria.org/listen-download-podcasts/>

Working with Children Clearances for kinship carers and household members

Information for kinship carers and usual household members



Families,
Fairness
and Housing



Introduction

On behalf of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, we would like to thank you for the important role kinship carers play in the lives of children when looking after children when they are unable to safely live with their parents. The department is here to support you to make sure you have access to the information and documents you need to provide the quality of care for these children.

While the children coming into your care may not have been planned, there are a number of things we require you to do to ensure their ongoing safety and protection. This includes seeking a **Working with Children Clearance**, which is a mandatory obligation set out in the *Worker Screening Act 2020*. This requirement stems from one of the many recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The department will assist you to reduce any further stress that you may already be experiencing.

Who is this resource booklet for?

This information is for both kinship carers who are being assessed by the Victorian Child Protection program and are providing kinship care for a specific child or children, and adult household members residing in the household, or who are regular visitors to your home.

What is a Working with Children Clearance?

A Working with Children Clearance (WWCC) (formerly Working with Children Check) is an ongoing screening process that provides greater protection for children, including children in kinship care, by monitoring a person's suitability to engage in child-related work (which includes carers). People who are required to hold a clearance include those undertaking child-related work in your community, such as childcare workers, librarians, and people who work in schools. It also includes people who work or volunteer in activities that regularly bring a person into contact with children, such as coaching a sports team.

WWCC is a screening process that assesses a person's criminal history and relevant professional conduct findings to ensure an appropriate level of monitoring is in place for people who work with children.

All people who engage in child-related work in Victoria are required, by law, to hold a WWCC. It is also a policy of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) that all adults providing kinship care (including teachers and police), as well as those adults residing as household members in kinship placements, must hold a WWCC.

When should I apply for a WWCC?

As a volunteer providing kinship care, there is no cost for you to apply and obtain a WWCC. This information is explained in more detail on page 10 of this resource booklet.

The law states that **kinship carers must apply for a WWCC within 21 days of a child being placed with you**. If you are not sure of how to apply for a WWCC, please speak with the child's Child Protection worker.

If you already hold a WWCC, we ask you to please update your WWCC details to include the department as your 'employer' and tick the 'kinship care' box .

We also ask that **all usual adult household members apply for a WWCC within 21 days of a child being placed in your care**.

What happens if I, as a kinship carer, do not apply for a WWCC?

Having children placed with you, whether planned or not, can be overwhelming, especially because of the requirements that must be undertaken by you, such as applying for a WWCC. The department is here to support you, so please don't think you are on your own.

It is important to know DFFH can assist you to apply for a WWCC as, unfortunately, if you do not apply, or update your details, within 21 days of the child coming to live with you, both you and the department are in breach of the law and the child or children cannot legally remain in your care. If you think you require more time to get your information ready, such as identifying information, please alert the Child Protection worker at the earliest opportunity to ensure there is no delay in the application process.

If you are an adult household member and do not apply for a WWCC within the 21 days, there may be a risk of the placement not being able to continue or of you being asked to leave the residence until a WWCC application can be lodged and determined.

Aboriginal carers

The department supports and promotes the importance of maintaining Aboriginal children's sense of identity and culture, and this is done by ensuring and supporting Aboriginal children to reside within their own family, with extended families or in their local Aboriginal communities. By promoting and fulfilling the requirements of the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles**, we can be assured that Aboriginal children raised in their own culture will grow up with a strong Aboriginal identity and connection to culture.

We know that past government policies and practices, including the Stolen Generations, have been very destructive to First Nations people and their culture which has led to the over-representation of Aboriginal children and adults in child protection, youth justice and adult justice systems. For many Aboriginal carers, the thought of applying for a WWCC may evoke fear and anxiety, especially if there is concern about a past criminal history or if you do not have all the required identity documents, such as a birth certificate or driver's license.

Please be assured that your cultural safety is the department's priority and if you have any concerns at all, please speak with the Child Protection worker, ACCO worker or community service organisation worker.

What is a 'usual household member'?

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing defines a 'usual household member' as someone who:

- is aged 18 years and older, and is not undertaking substantive caring responsibilities for the child (as this is the kinship carer) and is not the parent, biological sibling or half-sibling of the child;
AND
- resides in the household or on the property where the child/young person resides, including in an on-site bungalow or caravan, and any tenant(s), lodger(s), or boarder(s)
OR
- has a relationship with the carer(s) or another member of the household such that they can be expected to spend time regularly at the residence
OR
- resides in the home for a period greater than 14 days in any 12-month period, either consecutively or cumulatively
OR
- regularly attends at the residence of the child (including overnight) and spends significant periods of time (i.e. five hours on two or more days per week) at the home.

Is there a cost to apply for a WWCC?

No. If you reside in Victoria, there is no cost for kinship carers or usual adult household members when applying for a WWCC. You are considered a 'volunteer' for the purpose of the clearance and this is the category of clearance kinship carers and household members should apply for. In Victoria, you need to have your photo taken to accompany your WWCC application, and this is at no cost and can be completed at an Australia Post Office.

If you reside interstate, there is a cost for interstate kinship carers and household members to have their photo taken at Australia Post outside of Victoria. You will have this cost reimbursed by Child Protection when you provide the Australia Post receipt.

How do I apply?

New applicants

If you have not had a WWCC before, then you are a new applicant.

If you have a **smartphone** you can lodge your application online via Service Victoria, including uploading proof of identity documents and providing a photo of yourself.

[Working with Children Check \(service.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.service.vic.gov.au)

You will need to create an account with Service Victoria to commence the application process.

Follow all the prompts.

If you **do not have a smartphone**, you will need to apply online via the Working with Children Check Victoria website

[Working with Children Check | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au) for an **In-person Application** and lodge the proof of identity documents via Australia Post.

You can verify your identity online with Australia Post and then go to Australia Post to lodge the application in person.

If you can't verify your identity online with Australia Post, you still complete the online application, but verify your identity in person when you go to Australia Post to lodge the application.

After the online application is complete, each carer or household member is emailed a QR code. You will need to take the QR code to Australia Post to have your photo taken and provide 100 points of identification.

Australia Post will provide you with a receipt and a confirmation email will also be sent to your nominated email address. **Please forward the email OR receipt to the child protection worker. This completes the process.** Your WWCC will be sent to you in the mail in 4–8 weeks.

Organisation details for WWCC application or updating details

The WWCC application form will ask your employer organisation's name, and you should insert 'Department of Families, Fairness and Housing'. If the organisation's name is not provided, your application will not be assessed. You must use the full Department of Families, Fairness and Housing address and phone number in the organisational field:

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
PCB – Safety Screening – Kinship Carer
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne 3000
Phone: 03 9096 5715

Select **CODE 80 – kinship carer** – caring for a child placed by Child Protection under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* in the drop down box for **Occupation**.

Select **'Volunteer'** for occupation type.

I already have a Working with Children Clearance – what do I need to do?

If you already have a WWCC you are required to update your clearance to include **CODE 80 – kinship carer**, and the department's address details, as outlined above to identify the department as your 'employer'. You can click on this link to the Service Victoria website to update your details: <https://service.vic.gov.au/find-services/work-and-volunteering/working-with-children-check/update-your-working-with-children-check-details>

What if I don't have a computer?

Please let the Child Protection worker know if you do not have access to a computer or smartphone so that they can assist you in the application process. You can also access your local library which will have computers with Internet to fill out an online application.

I live interstate, and the child(ren) will stay with me – am I still required to apply for a WWCC?

Yes. Approved interstate kinship carers and usual adult household members of children who are clients of the Victorian Child Protection program are required to hold a Victorian WWCC.

To apply for a WWCC from interstate please speak to the Child Protection worker, as you will need to submit a paper application by mail.

I am a Victoria Police Officer or a teacher registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching – am I required to apply for a WWCC?

Yes. It is the policy of the department for all kinship carers and usual adult household members to hold a WWCC, regardless of whether the person is exempt from holding a WWCC due to their profession and employment.

What if I have a past criminal history?

Not all criminal offences or relevant disciplinary findings mean that a person poses an unjustifiable risk to the safety of children and will fail the WWCC application process. It is possible for applicants to have a criminal history or relevant regulatory findings and still be granted a WWCC. Whether an applicant passes or fails the WWCC depends on:

- the type of determination or finding you have been subject to,
- the offence you have committed, and
- the circumstances surrounding these matters.

What if I don't have a birth certificate or other documents to confirm my identity?

If you are worried you do not have the required identity documents, we can work with the Department of Government Services to confirm your identity.

What if my Working with Children Clearance is not granted or I am issued a notice from the Department of Government Services?

If the **Working with Children Check Unit** in the **Department of Government Services** has inquiries about your application or requires further information from you, they will contact you and tell you what those issues are. They can issue you with a 'notice' while they assess these concerns.

If you receive a notice and require support to respond, please contact the Child Protection worker as soon as you can, as they will support you to respond to the information requested by the WWCC Unit.

If a decision is made that you are not eligible for a WWCC, the WWCC Unit will send you a letter and they will also notify the department, who will work with you to determine a plan in relation to the child or children in your care or household.

What should I do if my circumstances change, for example, I have a new partner, or a person moves into my home?

If circumstances change in your home, for example, you have a new partner, a new household member, or new people frequenting your home, you must advise the Child Protection worker, as the person may be required to obtain a WWCC. If the Child Protection case has closed, however, then you are no longer required to keep Child Protection updated on changes to your household.

Who can help me if I am having trouble with the application process?

If you or any household member is having trouble with the process, including understanding why you need a WWCC, please speak with the Child Protection worker as soon as possible so they can assist you to ensure you have a WWCC to continue to care for the child or children.

More information

For more information about the WWCC process, please speak with the Child Protection worker.

Or visit the Working with Children Check website [Working with Children Check | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au).

Or contact the **WWCC customer support line** via an online enquiry form: [Contact Working with Children Check Victoria | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](http://www.vic.gov.au) or call **1300 652 879**.



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