

Facing the Truth

Learning from the Past How the Catholic Church in Victoria has Responded to Child Abuse

Fact Sheet 16 **Reform to Working with Children Checks**

11 July 2013

Amending the Working with Children Act is one of five reforms proposed by the Catholic Church in Victoria to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into child sexual abuse.

The Church proposes that the Working with Children Check (WWCC) system be improved so that the Church and similar entities can notify the authorities of adverse findings against Church personnel made by a Church process.

Working with Children Checks are administered by the Department of Justice, based on the charging and conviction of individuals in the criminal courts. The legislation permits the Department of Justice to make other inquiries when deciding whether to grant or refuse a Check and prescribes a number of organisations (for example, the Victorian Institute of Teaching) from which it can consider information.

However, it is not clear that the legislation would allow the Department to consider information submitted by bodies such as the Church about an applicant for a WWCC, or an existing holder of one.

The Church therefore recommends that the *Working with Children Act 2005* be amended to ensure that the Department of Justice is empowered to take account of information supplied to it by the Church or similar bodies. The Church proposes that the relevant Church authority (that is, the Archbishop, Bishop or Congregation Leader) would then report to the Department all adverse findings involving conduct covered by the WWCC system. Such findings would be made through either the *Melbourne Response* or *Towards Healing* against living Church clergy, religious or lay people in Victoria.

Once the Department of Justice receives this information, it could suspend or remove WWCC cards or conduct further inquiries. This proposal would allow the Department to remove a WWCC card held by a Church person who was the subject of an adverse finding, and to refuse an application for a WWCC.

For further information, go to:
<http://www.cam.org.au/Portals/45/Documents/Submission-by-the-Catholic-Church-in-Victoria-Regarding-Reform-Proposals.pdf>

For more information and support

www.facingthetruth.org.au

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Towards Healing

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