



Mernda Hills Christian College

Working with Children Clearance Policy

Document Control

Revision Number	Review Date	Implementation Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
Gilson College - Mernda					
	Mar 2022	Mar 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General review	Exec Leaders	Gilson College Council
Mernda Hills Christian College					
1	May 2023	Jan 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General review for clarityAdded ref to MOI359 and new Child Safe Standards	Exec Leaders	Exec Leaders

Rationale

The Working With Children Clearance (WWCC) helps Mernda Hills Christian College to protect its children and young people from physical and sexual harm. A WWCC does this by screening people's criminal records and criminal professional conduct, and by preventing those who pose an unjustifiable risk to children from working with or caring for them.

The Working With Children Clearance is a minimum checking standard set by the Worker Screening Act 2020 (implemented Sept 15, 2021), for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis, other than those exempted by virtue of their occupation, e.g. registered teachers, police. The Clearance is valid for 5 years.

All adults working at Mernda Hills Christian College, who are not registered teachers and who work directly in a paid or voluntary position with children and young people enrolled in the College, are required to have a valid and current Victorian WWCC.

Definitions - Worker Screening (WS) Act 2020

1. All definitions, as set out in the Act, will be taken into consideration when applying the minimum WWCC checking standard.
2. Current definitions include:
 - a. **Direct Contact** – WS Act 2020, Section 3 defines direct contact to include not only physical contact and face-to-face oral communication, but to also include contact by post or other written communication, telephone or other oral communication, or email or other electronic communication.
 - b. **Child-related work** – WS Act 2020, Section 3 defines child-related work as work engaged in
 - i. under a contract of employment or a contract for services (whether written or unwritten); or
 - ii. as a minister of religion or as part of the duties of a religious vocation; or
 - iii. as...[a] member of the committee of management of an unincorporated body or association...; or
 - iv. practical training undertaken as part of an educational or vocational course other than under an arrangement or agreement under Part 5.4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ; or
 - v. work engaged in as a volunteerConsequently, a WWCC applies to a person who engages or intends to engage in work at or for a school, and that usually involves direct contact (physical, face to face, post, written, telephone, oral, email, electronic) with a child, must have a current WWCC.
 - c. **Supervision** – Even if a person's contact with children as part of their child-related work is supervised by another person, they will still need to apply for a Working with Children Check.
 - d. **Non-conviction charges** – Non-conviction charges (charges that have been finally dealt with other than by a conviction or finding of guilt) for serious sexual, violent or drug offences are considered as part of WWCC assessments and reassessments.

Implementation

Undertaking paid or voluntary child-related work

1. Obtaining a WWCC is a legal requirement for everyone in Victoria doing paid or voluntary **child-related work** who does not qualify for an exemption. The Clearance seeks to regulate only the contact a child has with someone doing child-related work. The Act (2020) exempts a range of people from the WWCC including teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), as they have already been screened.

Suitability to work with or care for children

1. The WWCC does not assess a person's suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. In conjunction with Seventh-day Adventist Schools Victoria (Limited) (ASV), Mernda Hills Christian College Leadership assumes the role of assessing paid and voluntary workers' suitability to work with children, and the College works to establish sound, ongoing supervision practices so that children are safe from harm. For more information go to [Commission for Children and Young People](#).
2. In accordance with Ministerial Order 1359 and the Child Safe Standards the College has in place screening, supervision, training, and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel. Part of meeting this obligation is verifying the WWCC status of persons who propose to engage in authorised child-connected work in the College environment - on- or off-campus - while children and young people are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Categories Of Persons Requiring a current WWCC

1. The following are required to undergo a WWCC:
 - a. All College employees who are not registered teachers, and are engaged in direct contact, child related work on and off the College campuses e.g., Teacher Aids, Welfare Officers,
 - b. Administration Staff, OSHC Staff, Bus Drivers, Grounds persons, Education Practicum Students.
 - c. All volunteers engaging in direct contact, child related work on and off the College campuses, e.g. Parent volunteers.
 - d. All contractors and other service providers engaging in work on the College campuses, Building Contractors, Maintenance Contractors, Consultants.
 - e. Chaplains and Ministers of Religion engaging in direct contact, child-related work on and off the College campuses.
 - f. College Advisory Council members.

Special Obligations for Ministers of Religion

1. The Worker Screening Act 2020, Section 7 (4) creates special obligations for ministers of religion. All ministers of religion are required to get a WWCC unless the contact they have with children is only occasional and always incidental to their work.
2. Child-related work for ministers is defined more broadly than for everyone else. For ministers, child-related work is not limited to work involving unsupervised, direct contact with children. By law,

any contact with children, unless it is only occasional and incidental, is enough to require the minister to get a Clearance.

3. This includes ministers, regardless of whether their contact with children is supervised or not, who visit schools, children's camps or have children present in their congregation.
4. All Chaplains employed by the College are required to have a valid and current WWCC.

Education Practicum Students

1. The College requires all Education Practicum Students taken on by the College to have a valid and current Victorian WWCC.
2. The WWCC must be presented to the College Administration and verified, and details recorded on the College WWCC Register before the Education Practicum Student commences work in the College

Verifying WWCC status

1. Processes and procedures have been established and implemented at the College to assess and verify the suitability of all people who will undertake approved paid or voluntary work with College students in on- and off-campus learning environments.
2. The College Office Manager or Delegate ensures that each person meets their legal requirements of having a current WWCC by checking WWCC cards and their currency, photocopying and filing them, and maintaining a register of WWCC details.

Maintaining the WWCC Register

1. The College Office Manager or Delegate keeps a Register of WWCC details.
2. The Register ensures the status of each person on staff with a current WWCC is clear.
3. The Register is an Excel spreadsheet record of each holder. This list of details recorded includes:
 - Name,
 - WWCC number,
 - The beginning and expiry dates of their WWCC,
 - Years and months of currency remaining,
 - Whether the WWCC is current or not, by colour code,
 - Date the College *Community Code of Conduct* was last signed.

Monitoring the Currency of WWCCs

1. The Office staff conducts a minimum of an annual search of the Department of Justice WWCC website to check the currency of everyone's WWCC.
2. As the currency of WWCC Clearance status of a person nears expiry the College Office Manager or Delegate will inform the holder of the Clearance, and request that they renew their Clearance before expiry, and present their card at the office, so currency details can be updated
3. If a WWCC holder Clearance has expired, the employee, worker or volunteer will not be permitted to work or volunteer until a new Clearance is obtained and details recorded.

4. Employees, workers, or volunteers who are no longer employed by the College are removed from the WWCC records at least annually.

Exemptions to Requiring a WWCC

1. While the evidence of suitability required is generally a WWCC, a paid or volunteer worker's occupation may exempt them from the requirement to also have a WWCC e.g. teachers, police officers, etc. These individuals must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption, for example a current Victorian professional registration card. Records are kept of this evidence in the same way as WWCCs.

Criminal Record Check

1. In addition to a WWCC, it may also be necessary that a criminal record check is conducted through Adventist Schools Victoria (limited) (ASV). This may be required when possible offences are relevant to the duties of the volunteer, for example dishonesty offences, which are not part of the WWCC.
2. The College covers the cost of the criminal record check.

Related Policies and Processes

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy,
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- OH&S Policy
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Document
- WWCC Register
- Child Safe Risk Management Policy
- Child Safe Risk Management Risk Register
- Child Safe Protection Professional Learning and Training Schedule

Relevant Documentation or Legislation

- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 Sch 4 cl 5
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria - WWCC
- Ministerial Order 1359 and the Child Safe Standards
- Worker Screening Act 2020
- Worker Screening Regulations 2020