

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Children's Health Queensland
Hospital and Health Service

Committee Secretary
Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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Dear Committee Secretary

I write on behalf of the Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service (CHQ) to provide a submission to the Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee's (the Committee) inquiry into the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 (the Bill).

CHQ is a statewide paediatric hospital and health service which provides a range of inpatient and community healthcare services, including tertiary and quaternary specialist services at the Queensland Children's Hospital (QCH). The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is CHQ's highest priority; all children have the right to be safe from harm, everywhere, anytime. Aligning to CHQ's commitment to delivering the best care, we are committed to creating a child safe environment for everyone who interacts with our services. This is reflected in CHQ's Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy, which has been developed and tailored to support our response and proactively align to the National Principles for Child Safe organisations.

CHQ recognises that adhering to the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000* (the Act) and the requirements with respect to Blue Cards is just one important part to maintain a child safe organisation.

Under current provisions in the Act, particular staff at CHQ fall within the '*Health, counselling and support services*' category of regulated employment, at a paediatric healthcare facility, and so are subject to Blue Card requirements. The category does *not* include all staff, however, and many CHQ staff who fall outside this category of regulated employment may still have or gain unsupervised access to children onsite at CHQ facilities, by virtue of their duties. It is our belief that the average consumer of child healthcare services, at a CHQ facility, would in fact reasonably expect that all CHQ staff who have unfettered access to a facility, and may be in unsupervised contact with children or young people, would be required to hold a Blue Card.

The proposed amendments contained within the Bill do not currently propose to expand the '*Health, counselling and support services*' category for 'child-adjacent' services at a paediatric healthcare facility, nor to otherwise develop another category which is specific to facilities providing child-adjacent services.

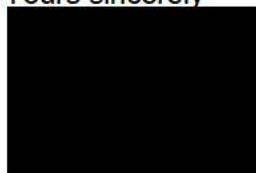
CHQ submits that it is opportune to consider further expanding the Bill to capture child-adjacent services, including, for example, facilities management, cleaning and catering staff at paediatric healthcare facilities. We believe that an expansion to include such staff employed at these facilities aligns to the rationale underpinning the current proposed expansions to regulated employment (and businesses), which we note flow from recommendations of the Queensland Family and Child Commission report *Keeping Queensland's children more than safe: review of the blue card system* and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

We also wish to highlight to the Committee the fact it is not unprecedented or unusual for staff providing child-adjacent services at paediatric healthcare facilities to be required to hold suitable clearance to work alongside children and young people. In Western Australia, the *Working with Children (WWC) Check* under the *Working with Children (Screening) Act 2004* (WA) requires cleaners and catering staff employed on wards of hospitals where children are the ordinary patients, and who have contact with children as part of their usual duties, to hold a suitable clearance.

CHQ otherwise notes our in-principle support for the balance of proposed amendments contained in the Bill.

We would be glad to provide further detailed submissions if it would be helpful to the Committee. Please direct any questions in relation to the matters raised in our submission to [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Frank Tracey
Chief Executive
**Children's Health Queensland
Hospital and Health Service**
10 / 07 / 2024