

Question on Notice

No. 781

Asked on 15 June 2021

MR T NICHOLLS ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (HON S FENTIMAN) –

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General advise what continuing progress has been made in 2020-21 to implement recommendations made by the Queensland Family and Child Commission regarding the blue card system?

ANSWER:

Queensland's blue card system has played an important role in contributing to safe environments for children for more than 20 years. Blue Card Services is a high-volume environment with significant reach. I am advised that as at 31 March 2021, over 830,000 people hold a blue card.

The Palaszczuk Government takes the safety of Queensland's children extremely seriously. The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) review found that Queensland's blue card system is one of the strongest in Australia but like all systems, it needs to continue to evolve to meet emerging risks.

The Palaszczuk Government has prioritised the introduction of a number of key reforms to the blue card system including:

- expanding the range of offences that disqualify a person from applying for a blue card;
- stricter requirements for people who rely on an exemption from blue card screening to work or volunteer with children and the introduction of new prohibitions and associated offences for restricted persons (which includes, for example, negative notice holders and disqualified persons);
- the introduction of a 'No Card, No Start' approach;
- an injection of \$17 million over three years to modernise the blue card system and allow people to apply for and renew their blue cards online;
- an improved identity check process for people applying for blue cards and the introduction of photographs on new cards issued; and
- an online portal for organisations to electronically manage their blue card obligations.

Fifteen of the QFCC's recommendations have been implemented. A further 55 recommendations are in progress. Key reforms currently being prioritised include:

- expanding the scope of who requires a blue card;
- further strengthening the blue card decision-making framework;
- reviewing assessment procedures to further streamline processes for people whose blue card applications require more complex assessment;
- improved information sharing with other working with children check jurisdictions through Queensland's participation in the National Reference System;

- implementing an electronic case management system for compliance activities; and
- increasing the scope of information considered as part of the blue card check.

Further, I am proud to advise that on 8 June 2021, Blue Card Services officially launched *Safe children and strong communities*, a strategy and action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations accessing the blue card system. The development and implementation of a strategy and action plan is a key recommendation (recommendation 73) of the QFCC's review of the blue card system.

Safe children and strong communities was developed through an extensive co-design process in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across remote, regional and urban communities in Queensland. The strategy and action plan aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations by providing a more supportive system through each step of the blue card process.

A specific oversight group, containing representation from peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, will be formed in 2021 to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these strategies and actions.

The remaining 11 recommendations have not yet commenced because they are dependent on the implementation of other recommendations and/or other government initiatives at the national and state level.

The Government will continue to build upon the strong foundations of the blue card system through the staged implementation of the QFCC recommendations, in close consultation with stakeholders.