

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA  
DIOCESE OF BRISBANE**

**REQUIREMENTS FOR BLUE CARDS [SUITABILITY CARDS]**

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The *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000* requires all persons who are employed or work voluntarily in certain child-related employment situations or who conduct child-related businesses to be screened through the Working with Children Check. All persons who are employed or work voluntarily in child care centres [diocesan and parish centres] are also required to be screened. The Check is a detailed national check of a person's criminal history including any charges or convictions.

The Act also allows the Commission for Children and Young People to consider any disciplinary history held by certain professional organisations in relation to an applicant for a blue card.

In addition, information from police investigations into allegations of serious child-related sexual offences will be taken into account even when the complainant was unwilling or unable to proceed.

All volunteers and paid employees who work with children or young people in the following categories must apply for a blue card –

- schools [other than teachers]
- school boarding houses
- churches
- religious representatives
- child care centres
- school crossing supervisors.

A person whose application is approved is issued with a positive suitability notice [a letter] and a blue card.

1. Diocesan Council Decisions:

Diocesan Council has made a number of decisions in relation to this matter and it is an absolute requirement that:

- **all clergy** licensed within the Diocese, and
- **all laity** engaged in a paid or unpaid capacity within the Diocese and who are working with children,

must hold blue cards or where appropriate exemption notices.

a. Clergy:

In its decision of 16 August 2001, the Council stated that **all clergy**, both current and future, licensed in the Diocese are required to have blue cards.

For the purposes of the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act*, **clergy** are classified as self-employed. The requirement to hold a blue card applies to all stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy on the 'Active' list as well as all Permission to Officiate and Retired clergy who exercise any ministry in the Diocese no matter how irregularly.

All clergy identified in the preceding sentence are required under the Act to hold a blue card before commencing any exercise of ministry.

Retired clergy with the Archbishop's Certificate for Officiating on Special Occasions are not required to hold blue cards.

b. Laity:

In its decision of 16 August 2001, the Council also stated that **all laity**, both current and future, who work with children are required to have blue cards.

All persons who are in or who come into paid positions within the Diocese and who work with children and young people are therefore required to hold blue cards – unless they are eligible for an exemption notice. Paid employment may be commenced provided that an application for a blue card or an exemption notice has been made, but employment may be terminated if the application is refused.

All unpaid persons who work with children [for example, Sunday school teachers and assistants, those who exercise leadership or assist in clubs and groups for children under the age of 18 years, all teachers of religious education in schools and any others who work with children] are also required by the Diocese to hold blue cards or where eligible exemption notices. Volunteers must hold a current valid blue card or exemption notice *before* they commence duties.

c. Liturgical Assistants:

Liturgical Assistants are required to hold blue cards or – where eligible – exemption notices only if they are working with children.

Rectors and Priests-in-Charge have a responsibility to ensure that a safe environment for children is provided at all times. The safety of children will always be the primary concern in considering whether an LA is required to have a blue card or exemption notice.

If it is likely that an LA:

- may be responsible for the supervision or training of children such as servers; or
  - may have regular contact with children; or,
  - from time to time, may be required to care for children;
- then an application for a blue card or an exemption notice should be made.

LAs - whether or not they are responsible for children in their role as LAs - who have another role or function in a parish in which they work with children are required to hold a blue card or exemption notice in relation to that role or function. This may include a role such as a youth leader, a Sunday school teacher, etc.

d. Parish Councils:

Regulation 1 of *The Eligibility for Office Canon* states in part that:

1. It is declared that a current Suitability Card for Child Related Employment issued pursuant to the Commission for Children and Young People Act 2000 (Qld) is a Specified Certificate (in this Regulation called "Specified Certificate").
2. It is declared that a person must hold a Specified Certificate in order to be qualified to hold the Office of member of Diocesan Council.
3. It is declared that a person must hold a Specified Certificate in order to be qualified to hold the Office of member of a Parish Council provided that:
  - (a) where:

- (i) an application has been made by a member of a Parish Council for a Specified Certificate; and
  - (ii) evidence that the application has been made is provided by the member to the Parish Priest of the Parish;
- the member is qualified to hold the Office subject to Section 5 (3) of the Canon until the application has been withdrawn or determined;
- (b) where a member is qualified pursuant to paragraph (a), the member must notify the Parish Priest of the Parish of the result of the application without delay.

All members of Parish Councils are therefore required to hold a blue card or exemption notice; or to have applied for a blue card or exemption notice in order to be qualified to hold the office of member of Parish Council. Where application for a card or exemption notice is refused, the qualification to hold office is to be terminated.

## 2. Exemptions:

The following persons do not require a blue card –

- children under 18 years who are volunteers
- parents who volunteer their services or conduct activities at a school where their child is attending. The child must be under 18 years.
- parents who volunteer their services or conduct activities at a church where their child is involved in the same activity.

From 1 July 2010, teachers and police officers who also provide child-related services outside their professional duties [such as a member of a parish council, a Liturgical Assistant, a Sunday school teacher, a member of a school council, etc] may apply to the Commission for an exemption from holding a blue card. An exemption will be issued free of charge and will remain valid for as long as the person continues as a police officer or is registered as a teacher.

## 3. Application for blue cards:

As stated above, clergy apply as self-employed persons. If the application is approved, the Commissioner will forward a letter [the positive notice] and a blue card to the applicant. The Commissioner also forwards a copy of the notice to the Registry Office. Similarly, if a negative notice is issued, a copy will be forwarded to the Registry Office.

Application forms for new and renewed cards for *all clergy* [stipendiary, non-stipendiary and retired] can be obtained from the Diocesan website. These forms are personalised to the Diocese which assists in the processing of the forms by the Commission and allows enquiries about matters related to an application to be addressed in a timely fashion.

For a person in a *paid position* in the Diocese, the application for a blue card is to be made on the appropriate form, and completed and forwarded to the Commissioner for Children and Young People by the 'Head of the Organisation' [parish priest, head of school, etc] for whom the person works or will work. The cost will be borne by the organisation.

For a person in an *unpaid position*, application for a blue card is to be made by the person, and completed and forwarded to the Commissioner for Children and Young People by the 'Head of the Organisation'. There is no cost for volunteers.

4. Changes in information:

All persons – employees, volunteers and clergy - holding a blue card are obliged under the Act to inform the Church of any changes in their criminal history. Clergy [as 'self-employed persons'] are also required to inform the Commissioner.

From 17 January 2005, the Commissioner will inform the person's employer if any person – paid or unpaid – is being reassessed by the Commissioner.

When new information emerges about a person's criminal history, the Commissioner must notify the employer.

5. Renewal of blue cards:

A blue card remains current for a period of three years; and the Commissioner for Children and Young People, three months prior to the conclusion of the period, will issue a reminder to holders of blue cards to apply for renewal. All clergy and laity must ensure that their applications for renewal are sent to the Commissioner in time to ensure continuity.

6. Employment of a person who holds a blue card:

It is mandatory that, when a person already holding a blue card is being employed, an *Authorisation to confirm a valid blue card application form* is submitted by the employer. This will ensure that the Commission has current employment details for all blue card holders and that the governing body can be informed if there is any change in the status of the blue card holder.

7. Volunteer moving to paid employment:

Volunteers who move into paid employment must now submit a *Volunteer to paid employee transfer form* and pay the fee of \$70.00. They will receive a new blue card which will be valid for three years.