

Frequently asked questions

What is a working with children (WWC) clearance?

A working with children clearance, also known as an Ochre Card in the Northern Territory, assists in protecting children from people who are an unacceptable risk of harm or exploitation to children.

The WWC Clearance aims to protect children by:

- deterring people from applying to work with children where they have a relevant charge or conviction on their criminal record that indicates they may harm a child;
- detecting new charges and convictions of those people who hold a current WWC and preventing them from continuing to engage in child-related work where their criminal record and behaviour indicates they may harm a child; and
- protecting children by creating awareness that safeguarding children is a whole of community responsibility

The clearance is just one tool which organisations can use to assess the suitability of a person to work in their organisation and to work with children.

Why do I need an Ochre Card?

Holding a valid Working with Children Clearance is a legal requirement as outlined in the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* for everyone in Northern Territory doing child-related work in a paid or voluntary capacity. This is to ensure that any person that poses an unacceptable risk of harm or exploitation is prevented from contacting children through their employment.

The Working with Children Clearance does not assess a person's suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. It is the responsibility of organisations to assess paid and voluntary workers' suitability to work with children and to establish sound, ongoing supervision practices so that children are safe from harm.

Who needs an Ochre Card?

Any person over the age of 15 years already working in, or who wants to work or volunteer in, child-related work must hold a valid Working with Children Clearance. Any person whose employer or volunteer organisation requires them to work with children must hold a valid Working with Children Clearance.

What does a WWC clearance cost?

The Northern Territory offers two types of clearances, an employment and a volunteer clearance. If your primary reason for holding a clearance is for paid employment, then you must apply for an employment

clearance. If you undertake voluntary work outside of your usual occupation and require a volunteer clearance, you can apply for a volunteer clearance.

Fees are subject to change in July each year in accordance with the Northern Territory Government determination of revenue units, the current cost of each clearance as at 1 July 2019 are as follows:

- Working with Children Clearance Employment **\$72**
- Working with Children Clearance Volunteer **\$72**

Note: If you apply for a volunteer clearance you **MUST** have a signed copy of the volunteer concession form accompanying your application. A copy of the volunteer concession form can be found: [Volunteer Concession Form Link](#)

Where can I lodge a WWC clearance application?

The fastest processing for applications is for those lodged using the online system. The system is simple and easy to use. To lodge a new or renewal application online go to our website: [SAFE NT URL](#)

If you are not able to lodge an application online you can lodge your application at any of the below locations:

- **SAFE NT:** 37 Woods Street, Darwin City, 0800.
- Any Territory Business Centre [TBC Locations Link](#)
- Any Police Station in the Northern Territory [Station Contact List](#)

If you attend to lodge your application at these locations you will need to ensure you 100 point of ID. The correct application forms are available at each location however you can complete the form in advance by downloading the National Police Check application form from our website: [SAFE NT PDF FORM LINK](#).

What payment cards do you accept online for WWC checks?

Visa or MasterCard Credit and Debit Cards. We do not accept Amex or Diners Club Cards at this time.

What are acceptable types of identification and how do I make 100 points?

You will need to provide a minimum of two types of identification including at least one form of photographic identification under category A. Your name and date of birth across your identity documents needs to match what you have put on your application and all documents must be originals, not copies. You can use other forms of identification is listed in category A or B to achieve 100 points of identification.

Category A	Points	Category B	Points
Passport (Australian/foreign)	70	Australian Citizenship Certificate	70
Australia Drivers Licence	40	Australian Birth Certificate	70
Firearms Licence	40	Centrelink Card	40
Tertiary Student ID with photo	40	Government employee ID	40
Australian Evidence of Age	40	Statutory Declaration with photo	40
		Medicare card	25
		Credit/debit card	25
		Property rates/utility notice	25
		Bank statement with current address	25

All identification provided must be valid and in the legal name of the applicant. The provision of a sufficient amount of identification to achieve 100 points is the responsibility of the applicant. SAFE NT cannot process an application that does not have sufficient identification.

What if I have changed name since I applied for a WWC clearance?

If your legal name changes, you need to provide SAFE NT with a copy of the relevant document which verifies the change of name (marriage certificate, 100 points of ID in your new legal name etc.). You will not be issued with a new Ochre Card in that name until your current card expires and you re-apply. However, if you want to have a new Ochre Card issued with your changed name, a fee of \$29 is payable.

How long does it take to get a WWC card?

The standard processing time for a working with children clearance is between 4-6 weeks, this can vary during times of increased volume such as the start of a school year or major events. Applications may be processed sooner depending on the volume of applications however there is no ability to 'FastTrack' an application.

If there is an urgent need to gain a clearance, applicants should ask their employer to seek an Exemption for them to commence work, these are issued by Territory Families and can only be applied for once an application is submitted and paid for with a valid receipt number.

What is an exemption?

An exemption is a temporary clearance period provided upon assessment by Territory Families. The purpose of this process is to enable people to commence employment without delay following an initial assessment. Once Territory Families grant an exemption, an individual can commence work, but not before.

Each individual and organisation has a responsibility to ensure those requiring a clearance hold a valid clearance or a temporary exemption at all times. Note the exemption is a temporary process, an exemption will not be granted once the application has been finalised.

Who is exempt from holding a WWC clearance?

There are very few and limited circumstances where a person may be exempt from having to apply for a Working with Children Clearance, such as where the person provides baby sitting or child minding in a private capacity to family or friends. Check the Working with Children website for the complete list. [WWC Website Link](#)

How long is an Ochre Card valid for?

A working with children clearance in the Northern Territory is valid for a period of two years (unless revoked). Once the Ochre Card expires, it is expired. A new application (including exemption) or a renewed valid clearance must be held by a person engaged in children related employment at all times.

When can I renew my Ochre Card?

A working with children clearance can be renewed no more than 2 months before or 2 months after the expiry of an ochre card. The system will not permit applications more than 2 months in advance. You will need to contact SAFE NT to obtain your Renewal Reference Number (RRN) within 2 months either side of the expiry.

It is important to note that you can renew an Ochre Card after it has expired and within the 2 month period, beyond this it will require a new application. However, the 2 month period after the expiry is NOT a grace period or extension, the card is expired on the date indicated on the card.

Do I need a new photo?

A new and renewal application for a working with children clearance both require a new photo. The new application will require the provision of 100 points of identification and a passport size photo. A renewal application will require only an updated photo, this is a requirement to renew your Ochre Card.

The photo does not need to be obtained as a specific passport photo, a passport quality photo taken with a smart phone or camera is sufficient. Please ensure the photo is of your head and shoulders, taken against a clear background with good lighting. Side profile photos, social media filters, model photography, group

photos and photos of your driver's licence and passport photos are not suitable and will not be accepted. Providing these types of photos will delay processing of your working with children clearance.

How do I check the progress of my application?

You can use the online system to check the progress of your application. If the WWC clearance says finalised but you have not yet received your Ochre Card, you can use the [online validity checker](#) to confirm that you hold a current clearance.

If the system states your WWC clearance is valid, you have a clearance and are able to immediately commence in child related employment.

If the system states your application is expired or in progress, please contact SAFE NT on 1800 723 368. It does not mean you have been denied, but it is possible that an issue may have occurred with your application. Taking early action to follow it up will assist us in processing your application in a timely manner.

Refunds

Once the WWC clearance check has been initiated we are not able to provide a refund. It is important for organisations and individuals to use the [online validity checker](#) before making an application to avoid processing fees. If a valid clearance is held then you do not need to apply for another clearance.

What gets checked as part of the clearance?

The working with children clearance assesses an applicant's national criminal history. The records include:

- convictions (spent or unspent)
- charges (whether heard, unheard or dismissed)
- youth justice records.

The completeness of the assessment is undertaken to ensure there is nothing in the candidate's history which may constitute a serious risk of harm to children.

How is a renewal different from a new application?

Both new and renewal application's for a working with children clearance require a national police check to be conducted, this is to ensure there is no new offending that needs to be considered for the applicant. The only difference is that with a new application you must provide 100 points of ID and the Renewal Reference Number is your 100 points of ID for existing card holder.

Can a person pass the WWC clearance if they have a criminal history?

Only certain offences will disqualify a person from engaging in child-related work. Other types of criminal history will be considered in the context of the likelihood of the risk of harm or exploitation to children, each person is assessed on the individual circumstances of their criminal history. Some offences and

charges require further investigation and screening is referred to and undertaken by the Screening Authority.

How is a WWC clearance different to a National Police Check?

A National Police Check examines a person's criminal history at a fixed point in time. The Working with Children Clearance offers certification to engage in child related work for a specific period of time, and offers ongoing monitoring of a candidate's suitability. This means if a relevant criminal offence is committed during the period of certification, SAFE NT can inform employers, impose conditions on the clearance notice or revoke the certification.

If a person has had a National Police Check, do they still need a WWC clearance?

Yes, it is still compulsory to apply for a Working with Children Clearance, even if that person has previously had a National Police Check as both are different in their purpose and application. One is a disclosure of a criminal history at a given point in time, the other is for an assessment to undertake child related employment.

What is a disqualifying offence?

A disqualifying offence is generally an offence that involves significant violence or sexual behaviour involving a child. The *Care and Protection of Children Regulations* clearly identifies those offences deemed as disqualifying. They can be found in Scheduled 3, Regulation 7(2)(a). Accordingly, under section 189 of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* a clearance notice will not be issued to a person where the victim was a child in the offences listed.

Who will conduct the screening for the WWC clearance?

SAFE NT will conduct the initial screening for child-related employment in the Northern Territory. SAFE NT is a unit of the Northern Territory Police. SAFE NT stands for Screening Assessment for Employment in the Northern Territory.

If during this assessment the matter requires further investigation it is referred to the Screening Authority. The Screening Authority is a group of Senior Northern Territory Government Officials who independently assess the suitability of a person to hold a clearance and base their assessment on whether or not the person is an unacceptable risk of harm or exploitation to children.

What kinds of information and materials to the Screening Authority consider?

In order to adequately assess an application the Screening Authority can consider a wide range of information and materials, this can include but is not limited to:

- a National Police check
- information from other Northern Territory government departments and agencies including but not limited to the Department of Education, Territory Families and Correctional Services

- publicly available information from professional registration bodies relating to persons disciplined or precluded from working with children or vulnerable people
- information from Northern Territory police, courts, and prosecuting authorities including information about charges for offences alleged to have been committed (regardless of the outcome of those charges), and
- expanded criminal history information from other Australian police jurisdictions.

In some cases, information from professional accreditation bodies regarding people disciplined and/or precluded from working with children or vulnerable adults will be taken into account.

Factors considered in the assessment process for a working with children clearance for child-related employment screening include:

- the nature of and circumstances surrounding the offence
- the presence of a pattern of offending (if any)
- time elapsed since the offence was committed
- severity of a court-imposed penalty
- the age and vulnerability of the victim
- the relationship to the victim and age difference
- applicant's own age at the time of the offence
- whether a child played a part in committing the offence (either directly or indirectly)
- relevance of the offence to the role of the applicant
- the applicant's conduct since the time of the offence.

If however the applicant has a conviction for a disqualifying offence, they will not be eligible for a clearance notice irrespective of the above considerations.

How can an applicant correspond with the Screening Authority in response to findings during their assessment?

Should the Screening Authority consider any elements of charges or convictions of ongoing concern, they will write to the applicant. The principles of natural justice remain and the Screening Authority will not make a decision without first writing to the applicant and giving them an opportunity to reply. Once a letter is sent an applicant has 21 days to reply before the Screening Authority review the matter to make a final decision.

The Screening Authority undertake all correspondence through written documentation, there is no ability to meet with the Screening Authority in person.

How will people know that they have passed the WWC screening?

People who pass the Working with Children Screening will be sent a Clearance Notice and an Ochre Card. The Ochre Card can be used to prove they have a current Working with Children Clearance.

What happens if someone does not pass the WWC screening?

SAFE NT will advise the person that they have not been issued with a Clearance Notice and will not be able to work in child-related employment.

If they do not agree with the decision, they can ask for it to be reviewed in the Local Court of the NT. SAFE NT will provide information on how to lodge an appeal with the Local Court.

I have a WWC clearance from another state, can I use it in the Northern Territory?

No. The Northern Territory does not recognise working with children clearances conducted outside of the Northern Territory. Conversely, a Northern Territory clearance is not accepted in other states and territories.

Currently, working with children checks are managed at a state or territory level and in accordance with their respective legislation. The Northern Territory clearance is valid for two years.

Can I fax or email my WWC clearance application to SAFE NT?

No. SAFE NT does not accept faxed or emailed copies. Please refer above for lodgement methods on how and where to submit your application form. Applications emailed or faxed will not be processed.

What if a person has a volunteer card and commences child-related employment?

If a person who holds a volunteer Ochre Card enters paid child related employment, their card remains valid until expiry. If that person continues in child related employment, upon expiry of their existing card they must apply and pay for an employment renewal of their working with children clearance. There is no need to change between the two types provided the person holds a valid card in either category.

My national organisation/peak body's policy requires everyone who has contact with a child to have a WWC check. In the Northern Territory I am not eligible to obtain one, what should I do?

If you have been denied a working with children clearance in the Northern Territory you are unable to engage in child related employment in the Northern Territory. You must consider roles of employment

outside those roles working with children. Your organisation may have other opportunities of employment that do not require a person to hold a working with children clearance notice.

My Ochre Card has been lost or stolen, what should I do?

Provided you have a valid clearance expiry date you do not need a physical card. However, some locations such as a schools and hospitals may ask you to present it to enter the premises. You can refer them to confirm the validity of your clearance to the [online validity checker](#). If they request the physical card, you can attend the SAFE NT office, provide photographic identification and order a replacement card at a cost of \$29, the card will be printed for you on the spot.

If you do not live in or near Darwin, you can order a replacement card online, over the phone or at a Territory Business Centre location.

I am a parent volunteer, do I need to have a WWC check?

Section 186 of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* states that a parent does not need to hold a working with children clearance provided they are assisting in a voluntary capacity, you are the parent of at least one child you are working with, perform the duties under the supervision of someone who holds a valid clearance and the activity does not require an overnight stay.

When should students going on placement apply for their WWC checks?

Students requiring a working with children clearance for placement should apply as soon as possible but not less than 6 weeks prior. They should apply online, ensure they have provided all the necessary documents including the concession form and notify SAFE NT by telephone as soon as they have lodged their application.

My organisation has been waiting weeks for an outcome to my WWC check application, what can I do?

Use the [online validity checker](#) in the first instance, you may be able to demonstrate you hold a clearance while you await delivery of the card, noting that if the system says you have a valid clearance, you can undertake child related employment immediately. If not contact SAFE NT by telephone and ensure there are not issues with your application. A specific timeframes cannot be provided but SAFE NT will do what it can to assist.

My friend and I lodged our applications at the same time, they have received theirs but I haven't, why is mine taking longer?

Each person's working with children clearance is an individual check, there are a variety of factors which could delay your application being finalised as quickly as someone else including:

- Commonality of your name.
- Whether or not you have lived outside of the Northern Territory.

- How many Australian jurisdictions you have lived in.
- Any criminal history returns regardless of how small the matter – a traffic violation taken to court can delay your applications.
- Ensuring all parts of the application were completed correctly.

You can do a couple of things to try and identify the problem:

- Use the [online validity checker](#), you may have a valid clearance you just may not have received the Ochre Card as yet
- Contact SAFE NT on 1800 723 368 to ensure there are no problems with your application such as sufficient identification, payment, photograph etc.

Quick WWC checklist

- Check personal details and ensure you have provided current contact information – ie. your postal address receives post.
- Ensure your 100 points of identification match your legal name of application. The certificate is issued in your legal name, not the name you wish to be known by ie. William not Billy.
- Make sure you have provide 100 points of identification or more – More identification is better, remember to ensure at least one that is photographic.
- Payment must be made with each application – pay at the lodgement locations or you can pay online when applying online.
- Note down your application number and follow up with SAFE NT that it was received. For applications lodged at the Territory Business Centres or Police Stations, please follow up a week after lodgement.
- Check the progress using the online system. Once finalised your card will arrive in the mail in due course if successful, if not contact SAFE NT as it may have been referred to the Screening Authority.

Things to remember

- Online is fastest
- You must ensure that you have provided sufficient points of identification.
- Provide a photo of the same quality expected for a passport photo.
- Use the online validity checker before contacting SAFE NT.
- Applications received by email or fax will not be processed.