

Child Safe Standards and Working with Children Checks Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Volunteers

1. What are the Child Safe Standards?

All organisations in Victoria that provide services or facilities for children must comply with the Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards were introduced by the Victorian Government in 2016 and state what an organisation must do to keep children safe. Updated standards were endorsed by the Government in June 2021. The seven standards are designed to bring about cultural change in organisations, so that child safety is part of the everyday thinking and practice of its leaders, employees as well as volunteers that operate in parks.

Parks Victoria, as the manager of the State's parks and reserves network, is dedicated to being a child safe organisation, and has zero tolerance for child abuse.

As a result, we are progressively introducing and updating new child safety policies and procedures to ensure that we comply with the Child Safe Standards.

You can read the standards in full on the [Child Safe Standards website](#).

The Standards are a way to:

1. Drive a real culture of child safety (Standard 1: Governance and leadership)
2. State how Parks Victoria will commit to child safety (Standard 2: Clear commitment to child safety)
3. Demonstrate how Parks Victoria employees and volunteers that operate in parks will behave in the presence of children (Standard 3: Code of conduct)
4. Guide Parks Victoria recruitment to get the most suitable people (Standard 4: Human resource practices)
5. Ensure that all allegations of child abuse are properly reported (Standard 5: Responding and reporting)
6. Identify risks to children (Standard 6: Risk management and mitigation)
7. Help make children feel empowered so they will speak up (Standard 7: Empowering children)

2. I am involved with, manage or coordinate a volunteer group that volunteers on parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria. Does Parks Victoria's child policy cover us?

All volunteers and volunteer groups that operate in parks now come under Parks Victoria's Child Safe Framework. This ensures that we are all working consistently and meeting the Child Safe Standards across all aspects of park management. Alternatively, if your group would like to create their own child safety policy, there is guidance on the [Child Safe Standards website](#).

3. What is a Working with Children Check (WWCC)?

A Working with Children Check is a review carried out by the Department of Justice and Community Safety under the *Worker Screening Act 2020*, in which a volunteer is screened for the level of risk they pose to children's safety.

The screening focusses on serious sexual, violence and drug offences. Once a volunteer has been deemed safe to work with children, the Department of Justice and Community Safety issues a five-year Volunteer WWCC card.

Unlike the National Police Check the WWCC is a 'live document'. That means it remains active for five years and during that time if a volunteer is involved in any legal infractions relevant to a WWCC, the Department of Justice and Community Safety will inform the organisations and/or groups that they volunteer with.

4. Why do I need a Working with Children Check (WWCC)?

Consistent with Child Safe Standards developed by the Commission for Children and Young People, Parks Victoria is dedicated to providing a child safe environment across all its managed parks and reserves, with a zero tolerance for child abuse that includes a risk-based screening process of staff and volunteers. Our parks are open to everyone, young people are actively encouraged to visit and experience parks and many facilities are shared. For this reason Parks Victoria has determined that all staff and volunteers that operate in parks will be required to hold a Working with Children Check.

5. When do I need to apply and have a valid Victorian Working with Children Check by?

Recognising that this is a new requirement and acknowledging that many volunteer groups have been affected by COVID-19 restrictions, the deadline for obtaining a WWCC has been extended to 31 December 2021, to allow you adequate time in which to apply. If you need extra assistance, our Volunteering team is offering additional support via volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au.

6. Do I need a WWCC if I have already had a National Police Check?

Yes, if you have had a recent Police Check, you will still need a WWCC as they serve different purposes.

A Police Check is a record of your criminal history at the time of application and only works retrospectively. A WWCC on the other hand, will only provide results for offences that are considered relevant for child safety purposes (sexual, violence and drug offences), and will flag whether someone is suitable to work with or around children. The WWCC will also alert a volunteer organisation if a volunteer was charged with a relevant offence during the life of the WWCC.

7. Do I need a WWCC if I already have a Blue Card?

If you have a Victorian Institute of Teachers (VIT) card (also called a blue card) you do not need to apply for a WWCC however you will need to apply for an exemption via the [When you don't need a check](#) webpage.

Example: Claire is a secondary school teacher currently registered with VIT. She volunteers to coach children at a local chess club and does not need a WWCC to do this work. However, as this child-related work is not teaching in a school or early childhood service, Claire must notify [Working with Children Check Victoria](#) within 21 days of commencing this work.

8. Do I need to re-apply for a WWCC if I already have a current one?

No, you can use your current card, however if you have NOT nominated Parks Victoria as an organisation that you volunteer with, you will need to update this information on your current WWCC. Every WWCC cardholder can login to check their WWCC to change or update their details via the [My Check](#) webpage.

9. How do I apply for a WWCC?

The WWCC are free and accessible to apply for online via the [Working with Children Check Victoria](#) website.

Once you have completed your application online, you will then need to visit a participating Australia Post office to verify your identity and to have your WWCC card photo taken.

The Victorian Government no longer offers the option of a hand-written application and it must be completed online. If you do not have access to the internet or need support to navigate the website, please contact the leader of your volunteer group or our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au

For further information on how to apply visit the [How to apply](#) webpage.

10. Do I have to pay for my check/how much will a WWCC cost?

Volunteer WWCCs are free (including the photo). Please ensure you select 'Volunteer' not 'Employee' when completing your online application and select Parks Victoria as your 'volunteer organisation'.

11. What details do I use for Parks Victoria on my WWCC application?

Please use the following address and phone number for Parks Victoria on your WWCC application, or if you have an existing WWCC, please ensure that you update your details to the following address and phone number:

**Parks Victoria
Level 10/535 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Phone: 03 8627 4699**

In the next section that asks for occupation fields and type, please use the exact information below to complete your application:

**Occupational field = 52
Occupational type = Volunteer**

This information is also provided in the handy application flowchart to help you with your application: <https://www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au/Volunteer/applywwcc>

12. Can I continue volunteering while my WWCC application is being processed?

Yes, you can continue to volunteer with Parks Victoria while your application is being processed. However, by law you must not work with children if you:

- have been charged with, convicted, or found guilty of a sexual, violent or drug offence listed in clause 2 of Schedule 3 of the Act
- have been given a Negative Notice in the past
- intend to supervise a child under the age of 15 in employment under the *Child Employment Act 2003*
- intend to work in a service regulated by the *Children's Services Act 1996* or in an education and care service under the *Education and Care Services National Law (Victoria) Act 2010*
- are subject to orders or reporting obligations under the:
 - *Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004*
 - *Serious Sex Offenders Monitoring Act 2005*
 - *Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009*.

If any of the above apply to you, please contact our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au to discuss your individual circumstances.

13. How long do WWCCs last?

WWCCs are valid for five years. You will receive a renewal reminder from 'Working with Children Check Victoria' 28 days before it is due to expire. You will also receive an automated email from Parks Victoria's Park Connect system. Please renew your WWCC before it expires to ensure that you are able to continue to volunteer with Parks Victoria.

14. Why do I need to upload my WWCC details to ParkConnect?

ParkConnect was introduced as an 'all in one' online volunteering management system that brings together recruitment, activity planning and approvals, volunteer preferences, skills and accreditations and reporting on the contributions of volunteering in parks. It enables better documentation that will reduce legal and other risks to volunteers. Providing your WWCC details on ParkConnect provides the confirmation from the Department of Justice and Community Safety of your approval and will ensure that your details are up to date and accurate.

15. Why does Parks Victoria need to approve my WWCC when the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) already has?

Parks Victoria does not conduct an additional approval, rather we are confirming the approval by Department of Justice and Community Safety and are ensuring the details provided are accurate and maintained.

16. I am concerned about my privacy. Who has access to my WWCC details on ParkConnect?

Parks Victoria is committed to protecting your personal information by complying with the information privacy principles set out in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (PDPA). WWCC information uploaded to ParkConnect is only accessible to the Volunteer team for processing. Staff and volunteer group leaders will only see a WWCC complete check box with no additional information.

17. I have been notified by Park Connect my WWCC is not valid.

To enable the Volunteer team to verify your card details you need to upload a clear copy of the front and back of your card. If we have not been able to verify the image, we will send an automatic email to notify you that you need to update ParkConnect with a new image.

18. I live interstate, do I require a WWCC?

If you live interstate and are volunteering in Victoria for less than 30 days a WWCC must be provided from the volunteer's resident state.

If you are volunteering for longer than 30 days you must apply for a Victorian WWCC via the [Apply for a Check from Interstate](#) webpage.

19. I'm an international student, do I require a WWCC?

International volunteers who are living in Victoria for longer than 8 weeks in a residential arrangement, e.g. students, must provide a WWCC as per other Victorian volunteers. You can apply online if you have sufficient Victorian identification requirements or face-to-face at any Australia Post using a utility bill, mobile phone bill, student ID with your current address listed clearly.

20. The volunteer activities I undertake do not directly involve children, and/or their parents/carers are always present: do I still need a WWCC?

Parks Victoria actively encourages children to experience Parks and all organisations in Victoria that provide services or facilities for children must comply with the Child Safe Standards. The presence of parents/carers supervising children does not remove the requirement for meeting the Child Safe Standards or WWCC requirements. This is because the presence of parents/carers does not eliminate the risk of child abuse occurring in organisational contexts, although it may reduce the risk. Even if activities do not directly involve children, Parks Victoria is committed to creating a child safe environment.

21. I think I may have a problem with passing my WWCC. What should I do?

As a first step, please speak to your volunteer group, or if you are not comfortable doing so, you are welcome to contact your Parks Victoria contact or our Volunteer Team at volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au to discuss your individual circumstances. All conversations will be handled in accordance with our confidentiality and privacy policies.

If you do not pass your WWCC, you will be issued with a negative notice by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety. You, the Volunteer (applicant) and Parks Victoria will be informed. Parks Victoria maintains strict adherence to privacy legislation which regulates the receipt and use of personal information. If you receive a negative notice, you cannot volunteer at Parks Victoria.

22. I am a volunteer group leader. What is my role in ensuring WWCC compliance?

Parks Victoria as the land manager has strict legal obligations to ensure that you keep children safe, and Parks Victoria is committed to supporting you through these processes.

A volunteer group leader's responsibility is to communicate the requirements and ensure group members who volunteer comply. We understand volunteers may attend spontaneously that are not group members. You are required to communicate requirements, with the onus for compliance

coming back to each volunteer. There is also a requirement for Parks Victoria to have sufficient processes in place to ensure that we are aligning to all Child Safe Standards.

23. What if I need to report a child abuse allegation? What do I do?

You must report child abuse. Even if you are not sure or suspect it may have happened or be happening. It is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe, you must report it.

To report child abuse that you have witnessed or been told about, first determine if the child is safe or if it is an emergency.

Call '000' immediately and get help from the police or ambulance if it is an emergency.

If it is not an emergency and you have witnessed or been disclosed to about child abuse, collect as much information as you can and then tell a Parks Victoria Ranger or employee, and potentially an external body, such as the Police.

When you collect information about an allegation, consider the following fact-finding questions such as:

- Can you tell me what happened from the start?
- When and where did the incident occur?
- Did anyone see the incident?
- Who was there?
- What was said/done?

Especially if the complainant is a child, it is important to write down the details of the allegation using the complainant's own words to avoid jumping to conclusions without getting all the facts. For instance, a six-year-old child is unlikely to say, "That person sexually assaulted me", but they might say something like, "I don't like the games that man plays with me."

If you have any more questions about how to report an allegation of child abuse, please contact the Statewide Volunteer Team on volunteer@parks.vic.gov.au.

24. I want to learn more about the Child Safe Standards and how they apply, is their training available?

Parks Victoria has developed a new self-paced online Child Safety Awareness training module now available on ParkConnect. If you are interested in completing the training it is accessible via ParkConnect <https://www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au/Volunteer/vol-training/>. You will receive a certificate of completion and acknowledgement on your ParkConnect profile.