



Media Release

Blue Card Child Protection to be expanded

18.08.04

Legislation to expand the range of people who are not eligible for Blue Cards, which allow them to work with children, would be introduced later this year, Premier Peter Beattie said today.

Mr Beattie said in Parliament that the community wanted the Government to increase the level of protection for children.

The changes will allow the Commissioner for Children and Young People to take into account not just a person's criminal record, but a broader range of information when deciding whether to issue someone with a Blue Card.

"The Commissioner will be able to consider investigative information obtained by the Queensland Police Service even if that information did not result in a charge or conviction," Mr Beattie said.

"To ensure that only appropriate information is passed on by police, there is safeguard criteria limiting the circumstances in which information may be provided by the Police Service.

"This includes the investigation must have related to an alleged sexual offence involving a child, the matter was fully investigated and the only reason it did not result in a charge was because the complainant was unwilling or unable to proceed."

Mr Beattie said the changes would also allow the Commissioner to take into account information from a number of professional registration bodies, such as the Queensland Nursing Council, about an individual being professionally deregistered in relation to an allegation of harm against a child.

Employees and volunteers of several new categories of child-related employment will also be required under the amendments to hold Blue Cards.

These will include: employees of hostels for rural children; home stay providers; providers of recreational activities for children; and clergy and non-teaching school staff employed before 1 May 2001, when the Blue Card was introduced.

"My Government recognises that there will be some people who object to the additional information being made available to the Commissioner for screening purposes," Mr Beattie said.

"But the action we are taking accurately reflects the concerns of the community in demanding further action to protect Queensland's children," Mr Beattie said.

"The amendments will make the legislation better and the child protection measures stronger."

Mr Beattie said Queensland's Blue Card system, which has been praised by child protection campaigners, was not an ironclad guarantee against someone offending in the future. The screening process could only identify predators who were known to authorities due to past events.

"The Blue Card can never replace vigilance by parents, families and the community," Mr Beattie said.

The recommended legislative changes follow a review of the Blue Card by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

18 August 2004

Media inquiries: Steve Rous 3224 4500