



OFFICE OF AGED CARE QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE

Police Certificate Guidelines for Aged Care Providers

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1. INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines have been developed to assist approved providers with the management of police certificate requirements under the *Accountability Principles 1988* (the Accountability Principles) made pursuant to the *Aged Care Act 1997* (the Act).

Police certificates are intended to complement robust recruitment practices that are part of an approved provider's responsibilities under the Act to ensure staff are suitable to provide aged care.

The requirement in the Accountability Principles for police certificates, and statutory declarations where required, places a legislative obligation upon approved providers in relation to their employment practices for staff members and volunteers. This requirement is in addition to existing requirements that relate to recruitment and retention of staff, including the suitability of "Key Personnel" under the Act.

Approved providers should note that failure to meet the police certificate requirements may result in compliance action under Part 4.4 of the Act.

2. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The Act establishes the Commonwealth aged care framework. In addition, the Principles provide specific details on a number of issues for use by the aged care industry and regulators. In relation to police certificate requirements in aged care:

- Part 4 of the Accountability Principles sets out the police check requirements;
- Schedule 1 of the *Community Visitors Grant Principles 1997*, sets out the requirements for Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) auspices to ensure their volunteers have had or have applied for police certificates and made a statutory declaration where required; and
- Sections 19.5A and 19.5B of the *Records Principles 1997*, describe the types of records that need to be kept by approved providers to meet the legislative requirements, and the duty to keep records in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*.

Approved providers should familiarise themselves with these provisions. All Commonwealth legislation is available on the Commonwealth Law website, www.comlaw.gov.au.

3. POLICE CERTIFICATES

A police certificate (also called a “*National Criminal History Record Check*” or “*National Police Certificate*”) is a national report prepared by the Australian Federal Police or by a State or Territory police force or service that discloses evidence of whether a person:

- has been convicted of an offence;
- has been charged with and found guilty of an offence but discharged without conviction; or
- is the subject of any criminal charge still pending before a Court.

The information on the certificate is drawn from all Australian jurisdictions and is subject to relevant spent conviction schemes.

3.1 Spent convictions

The Commonwealth, the Territories and most States have “spent conviction” schemes, allowing former offenders to “wipe the slate clean” for old minor offences in certain circumstances. The aim of the Scheme is to prevent discrimination based on old convictions, once the relevant waiting period has passed, provided the individual has not re-offended during this period.

Convictions that are considered “spent” under State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation will not be disclosed on the police certificate, unless the category of employment or purpose of the application is exempt from spent convictions legislation. Legislation varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, convictions for more serious offences cannot be spent.

4. POLICE CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS

Police certificates, not more than three years old, must be held by:

- all staff members who are reasonably likely to have access to care recipients, whether *supervised or unsupervised*; and
- volunteers who have unsupervised access to care recipients.

4.1 Staff member - definition

A staff member is defined in section 1.18 of the Accountability Principles as a person who:

- a) has turned 16 years of age; and
- b) is employed, hired, retained or contracted by the approved provider (whether directly or through an employment or recruitment agency) to provide care or other services under the control of the approved provider; and
- c) has, or is reasonably likely to have, access to care recipients.

Examples of staff members include:

- key personnel of the approved provider;
- employees and contractors of the approved provider who provide care to care recipients, this includes all staff employed, hired, retained or contracted to provide services under the control of the approved provider whether in the residential aged care setting, a community setting or in the care recipient's own home;
- allied health professionals contracted by the approved provider to provide care to care recipients;
- kitchen, cleaning, laundry, garden and office personnel employed by the approved provider either directly or through a contract agency; and
- consultants, trainers and advisors for accreditation support or systems improvement who are under the control of the approved provider.

Where an approved provider has a contract with an agency that provides staff, the contract should include the requirements for police checks. The contract should state that any staff provided must have had a police check, and that the check does not preclude them from working in aged care.

Examples of persons who under the Accountability Principles are not considered staff members include:

- visiting medical practitioners, pharmacists and other allied health professionals who have been requested by, or on behalf of, a care recipient but are not contracted by the approved provider; and
- trades people who perform work otherwise than under the control of the approved provider (that is, independent contractors). For example, plumbers, electricians or delivery people who are utilised on an 'ad hoc' basis.

Contractors

Approved providers must ensure that any contractors engaged who are under the control of the approved provider have a current police certificate in place, and have been assessed as suitable to work within aged care. An approved provider's contractual arrangements must make provision for police check requirements, imposing the same responsibilities on the contractor, supplier or broker as that imposed on the approved provider under the legislation, including where suppliers sub-contract work to others.

4.2 Volunteer – definition

Section 1.18 of the Accountability Principles defines a volunteer as a person who:

- a) is not a staff member;
- b) offers his or her services to the approved provider; and
- c) provides care or other services on the invitation of the approved provider and not solely on the express or implied invitation of a care recipient; and
- d) has, or is reasonably likely to have, unsupervised access to care recipients; and
- e) has turned 16 years of age or, if the person is a full-time student, has turned 18 years of age.

Examples of persons who are not volunteers under this meaning include:

- persons volunteering who are under the age of 16 (except where they are a fulltime student, then under the age of 18);
- persons who are expressly or impliedly invited into the aged care service by a care recipient (for example, family and friends of the care recipient); and
- volunteers who only have supervised access to residents. For example, persons who volunteer in an aged care service to read to care recipients, but are not alone with any one care recipient.

4.3 New staff members and volunteers

While approved providers should aim to ensure all new staff members and unsupervised volunteers have obtained a police certificate before they start work, the legislation does provide arrangements for commencing work prior to receipt of a police certificate in exceptional circumstances. Section 1.22 of the Accountability Principles enables a person to start work prior to obtaining the police certificate and pending an assessment of any criminal conviction identified in the certificate if:

- the care or other service to be provided by the person is essential; and
- an application for a police certificate has been made before the date on which the person first becomes a staff member or volunteer; and
- until the police certificate is obtained, the person will be subject to appropriate supervision during periods when the person has access to care recipients; and

- the person makes a statutory declaration stating that they have never been:
 - (a) convicted of murder or sexual assault; or
 - (b) convicted of, and sentenced to imprisonment for, any other form of assault.

In such cases, the approved provider must have policies and procedures in place to demonstrate:

- that an application for a police certificate has been made;
- the care and other service to be provided is essential;
- the way in which the person would be appropriately supervised; and
- how supervision will occur in a range of working conditions, eg. during night shifts and holiday periods when supervisory staff numbers may be limited.

4.3.1 Statutory declarations

A statutory declaration is a written statement declared to be true in the presence of an authorised witness. A person who wants to use a statutory declaration in connection with a law of the Commonwealth, must make the declaration in accordance with the *Commonwealth Statutory Declarations Act 1959* and the *Commonwealth Statutory Declarations Regulations 1993* (the Regulations).

Statutory declarations relating to police certificate requirements must be made on the form prescribed under the *Commonwealth Statutory Declarations Act 1959*, as the police certificate requirements are in connection with a law of the Commonwealth. A statutory declaration may be invalid if it is made using an incorrect form, is witnessed by a person not prescribed by the Regulations as an authorised witness, or if it is incomplete.

A sample statutory declaration form is at Appendix 2, along with a list of people who are able to witness the declaration. The statutory declaration form can be downloaded from the Attorney-General's Department website, www.ag.gov.au/statdec. An information sheet for persons making a statutory declaration and for witnesses can also be accessed from this site.

Approved providers should note that anyone who makes a false statement is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Commonwealth Statutory Declarations Act 1959*.

4.4 Maintaining police checks

Approved providers have a responsibility to take reasonable measures to require each of their staff members and volunteers to notify the approved provider if they are convicted of a precluding offence in the three year period between obtaining and renewing their police check.

Where an approved provider is satisfied on reasonable grounds that a staff member or volunteer has been convicted of a precluding offence they must ensure that person does not continue as a staff member.

4.5 Community Visitors Scheme (CVS)

CVS auspices will be required to ensure police certificate arrangements are in place for each community visitor. CVS volunteers should supply the approved provider with their Letter of Introduction stating that they are approved as visitors under the CVS. Approval includes having a current police certificate and being assessed as suitable to work in aged care.

5. OBTAINING A POLICE CERTIFICATE

While the approved provider is responsible for ensuring that all staff members and certain volunteers undergo police checks, arrangements for obtaining the police certificate is a matter for negotiation between the provider and the individual, as part of the employment arrangements.

A person may either obtain and then provide a police certificate to the approved provider or give consent for the approved provider to request a police certificate from a State or Territory Police Service, or the Australian Federal Police.

In some cases, the approved provider may meet the costs of obtaining the certificate. In other cases, the individual will meet the cost. This is a matter to be negotiated between the approved provider and the individual.

A list of contact details and websites for all Australian Police Services is available at [Appendix 1](#).

5.1 Approved provider obtains

Where an approved provider has consent to obtain a police certificate on behalf of an individual, the approved provider may apply for the police certificate from the relevant State or Territory police service. The exception is Queensland, where only Government agencies with legislative authority can obtain police certificates on behalf of individuals.

In instances where approved providers request 500 or more police certificates in a three year period the approved provider may wish to consider seeking accredited agency status. Accredited agencies can deal directly with CrimTrac (the agency authorised to provide criminal history checks) at a reduced rate and response time than the State and Territory police services.

Approved providers can obtain consent forms from the relevant police services or CrimTrac. In some jurisdictions, parental consent may be required to request a police certificate for an individual under the age of 18 years.

For a police certificate to be valid, the individual's name and date of birth must be accurate. Therefore, approved providers who are requesting a police certificate on behalf of a staff member or volunteer, should ensure all information provided is accurate.

5.2 Individual obtains

Individuals, including prospective employees and relevant volunteers, may request a national police certificate through the police service in the State or Territory where they live. For Australian Capital Territory residents, the relevant police service is the Australian Federal Police.

Individuals may be able to claim the cost of the police certificate as a work-related

expense for tax purposes. Further advice on this issue is available from the Australian Taxation Office through their website at: <http://www.ato.gov.au>

Volunteers may be eligible to obtain a police certificate at a reduced cost, whether requested by an individual or by an approved provider on behalf of a volunteer.

When individuals undertake to obtain their own police certificate, approved providers should sight an original or a certified copy of the police certificate and record this information in an appropriate manner for compliance purposes. See Record Keeping for further information.

5.3 Citizens or permanent residents (past or present) of other countries

Staff members and volunteers who have been citizens or permanent residents of a country other than Australia **since turning 16 years of age**, must make a statutory declaration before starting work in any aged care service, stating that in Australia, or any other country, they have never:

- been convicted of murder or sexual assault; or
- been convicted of, and sentenced to imprisonment for, any other form of assault.

This statutory declaration is **in addition** to a current national police certificate, as this records only those convictions recorded in Australian jurisdictions.

6. ASSESSING A POLICE CERTIFICATE

This section provides guidance to approved providers in assessing any recorded convictions on a person's police certificate in order to make a decision whether to employ or retain the services of that person.

6.1 Convictions that preclude a person from employment

Sections 1.19 and 1.21 of the Accountability Principles provide that an approved provider **must not allow a person to become a staff member or volunteer** unless the approved provider is satisfied that their police certificate is not dated more than 3 years before the day on which the person was to first become a staff member or volunteer and that the certificate **does not record** that the person has been:

- a) convicted of murder or sexual assault; or
- b) convicted of, and sentenced to imprisonment for, any other form of assault.

Any person with a conviction for an offence listed above **must not** be employed, contracted, hired, retained, accepted as a volunteer (as per the definition in the Accountability Principles) or allowed to provide any other care or ancillary duties, in an aged care service subsidised by the Commonwealth.

6.2 Other convictions

Approved providers should ensure that aged care services have policies and procedures in place for assessing a person's suitability to work in aged care in relation to other convictions and offences. Such policies should consider the level of risk and relevance to the position they hold, including the extent of access to care recipients.

The following considerations are intended as a guide only to assist approved providers in assessing a person's police certificate for their suitability to be either a staff member or volunteer in an aged care service:

Access: the degree of access to care recipients, their belongings, and their information. Considerations include whether the individual will work alone or as part of a team, the level and quality of direct supervision, the location of the work, i.e. residential, community or home based settings.

Relevance: the type of conviction in relation to the duties a person is, or may be undertaking. An approved provider should only have regard to criminal record information indicating that the person is unable to perform the inherent requirements of the particular job.

Significance: the type of conviction in relation to the duties a person is, or may be, undertaking.

Proportionality: whether excluding a person from employment is proportional to the type of conviction.

Timing: when the conviction occurred.

Employment History: whether an individual has been employed since the conviction.

Individual's Information: the findings of any assessment reports following attendance at treatment or intervention programs, or other references; and the individual's attitude to the offending behaviour.

Pattern: whether the conviction represents an isolated incident or a pattern of criminality.

Likelihood: the probability of an incident occurring if the person continues with, or is employed for, particular duties.

Consequences: the impact of a prospective incident if the person continues, or commences, particular duties.

Treatment Strategies: procedures that will assist in reducing the likelihood of an incident occurring, including, for example modification of duties.

An approved provider's decision regarding the employment of a person with any recorded convictions must be rigorous, defensible and transparent.

Approved providers should also note that if a person feels they have been discriminated against based on their criminal record in an employment decision of an approved provider, they may make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission).

For further information refer to the Commission's guidelines: *On the Record – Guidelines for the prevention of discrimination in employment on the basis of criminal record*. The Guidelines are available on the website at:

http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/criminalrecord/on_the_record/index.html

There is discrimination legislation in some States and Territories, which makes it unlawful to discriminate because of an "irrelevant criminal record". Under these laws binding orders can be made against employers.

In addition, under the *Fair Work Act 2009* there are provisions relating to unfair dismissal and unlawful termination. Approved providers should familiarise themselves with their responsibilities in relation to the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Approved providers should seek their own legal advice on a case by case basis regarding the potential termination of an employee and any entitlements they may have.

7. RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

7.1 Demonstrating compliance with requirements

Under section 19.5A of the *Records Principles 1997* (the Records Principles), an approved provider must keep records that enable the provider to demonstrate that:

- there is a police certificate, which is not more than three years old, for each staff member or volunteer, in accordance with Part 4 of the Accountability Principles; and / or
- an application has been made for a police certificate where a staff member or volunteer does not have a police certificate in accordance with Part 4 of the Accountability Principles; and / or
- a statutory declaration has been provided by any staff member or volunteer who does not have a police certificate or was a citizen or permanent resident of a country other than Australian since turning 16 years of age in accordance with Part 4 of the Accountability Principles.

Where employment agencies hold police certificates, a reference number, or similar, should be given to the approved provider and kept on file as evidence that the approved provider is compliant with the requirements of the Records Principles.

Volunteers supplied through auspice organisations under the CVS provide a standard letter stating that they are 'approved' as visitors under the Scheme. Holding this letter (or a copy) on file, or indicating on file that it has been sighted by the approved provider, is evidence that the approved provider is compliant with the requirements of the Records Principles for CVS volunteers.

Two template documents are at Appendix 3 of the Guidelines to assist approved providers manage their record keeping requirements. These are:

- an individual assessment form; and
- a police certificate register document.

7.2 Privacy considerations

Approved providers must have systems and procedures in place that will allow them to meet all of their responsibilities under the Act, including:

- complying with requirements in relation to protection of personal information (section 62-1 of the Act); and
- ensuring compliance with all other relevant legislation and regulatory requirements in relation to privacy issues.

If an approved provider keeps an original or a copy of a police certificate, it must be kept in accordance with the National Privacy Principles, as set out in the *Privacy Act 1988*.

You can obtain further information about these responsibilities from the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's website at: <http://privacy.gov.au>

8. MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH REQUIREMENTS

The Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency, as part of its normal audit process in relation to the Accreditation Standards, will monitor compliance with the police certificate requirements in residential aged care services. The Department of Health and Ageing also monitors compliance with these requirements through its responsibility to ensure approved providers meet their responsibilities under the Act.

For other aged care services under the Act, police certificate requirements will be monitored through existing monitoring programs.

Approved providers must have policies and procedures in place to demonstrate suitable management and monitoring of the police certificate requirements for all staff members and volunteers. This includes, for example:

- three-year police check renewal procedures;
- appropriate storage, security and access requirements for information recorded on a police certificate; and
- evidence of an approved provider's decisions in respect of all individuals, or where staff are contracted through another agency, evidence of arrangements with the agency that demonstrates the police certificate requirements.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need any further information on police check requirements, please contact the Aged Care Information Line on 1800 500 853.

Information about the requirements can be found on the Department's website, www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-quality-police.htm.

**APPENDIX 1 AUSTRALIAN POLICE SERVICES
CONTACT NUMBERS AND WEBSITE ADDRESSES**

Australian Police Services contact numbers and website addresses	
Australian Federal Police (for ACT)	Phone: (02) 6202 3333 http://www.afp.gov.au/business/national_police_checks
New South Wales Police Service	Phone: (02) 8835 7888 http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/about_us/structure/specialist_operations/forensic_services/related_information/criminal_records_section/related_information/forms
Victoria Police	Phone: 1300 881 596 http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=274
Queensland Police Service	Phone: (07) 3364 6705 http://www.police.qld.gov.au/services/purchase/polcert.htm
Western Australia Police Service	Phone: (08) 9222 1111 http://www.police.wa.gov.au/Forms/tabid/1093/Default.aspx
South Australia Police	Phone: (08) 8204 2455 http://www.sapolice.sa.gov.au/sapol/services/information_requests/national_police_certificate.jsp
Tasmania Police	Phone (03) 6230 2928 http://www.police.tas.gov.au/permits/criminal-history
Northern Territory	Phone: 1800 723 368 http://www.pfes.nt.gov.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=87&m=20&sm=37

APPENDIX 2
STATUTORY DECLARATION

Commonwealth of Australia
STATUTORY DECLARATION
Statutory Declarations Act 1959

1 Insert the name, address and occupation of person making the declaration

1 make the following declaration under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*:

- 2
1. I declare that (*place a tick or cross in applicable box*):
- since turning 16 years of age, I have been a citizen or permanent resident of a country/countries other than Australia.
 - since turning 16 years of age, I have never been a citizen or permanent resident of a country/countries other than Australia
2. I declare that I have never been:
- convicted of murder or sexual assault; or
 - convicted of, and sentenced to imprisonment for, any other form of assault.

2 Set out matter declared to in numbered paragraphs

I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*, and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

3 Signature of person making the declaration

3

4 Place

5 Day

6 Month and year

Declared at ⁴ _____ on ⁵ _____ of ⁶ _____

7 Signature of person before whom the declaration is made (see over)

Before me,⁷

8

8 Full name, qualification and address of person before whom the declaration is made (in printed letters)

Note 1 A person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence, the punishment for which is imprisonment for a term of 4 years — see section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*.

Note 2 Chapter 2 of the *Criminal Code* applies to all offences against the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* — see section 5A of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*.

APPENDIX 2

STATUTORY DECLARATION

A statutory declaration under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* may be made before—

(1) a person who is currently licensed or registered under a law to practise in one of the following occupations:

Chiropractor	Dentist	Legal practitioner
Medical practitioner	Nurse	Optometrist
Patent attorney	Pharmacist	Physiotherapist
Psychologist	Trademarks attorney	Veterinary surgeon

(2) a person who is enrolled on the roll of the Supreme Court of a State or Territory, or the High Court of Australia, as a legal practitioner (however described); or

(3) a person who is in the following list:

Agent of the Australian Postal Corporation who is in charge of an office supplying postal services to the public Australian Consular Officer or Australian Diplomatic Officer (within the meaning of the *Consular Fees Act 1955*)

Bailiff

Bank officer with 5 or more continuous years of service

Building society officer with 5 or more years of continuous service

Chief executive officer of a Commonwealth court

Clerk of a court

Commissioner for Affidavits

Commissioner for Declarations

Credit union officer with 5 or more years of continuous service Employee of the

Australian Trade Commission who is:

(a) in a country or place outside Australia; and

(b) authorised under paragraph 3 (d) of the *Consular Fees Act 1955*; and

(c) exercising his or her function in that place Employee of the

Commonwealth who is:

(a) in a country or place outside Australia; and

(b) authorised under paragraph 3 (c) of the *Consular Fees Act 1955*; and

(c) exercising his or her function in that place Fellow of the National Tax Accountants' Association Finance company officer with 5 or more years of continuous service

Holder of a statutory office not specified in another item in this list

Judge of a court

Justice of the Peace

Magistrate

Marriage celebrant registered under Subdivision C of Division 1 of Part IV of the *Marriage Act 1961*

Master of a court

Member of Chartered Secretaries Australia

Member of Engineers Australia, other than at the grade of student

Member of the Association of Taxation and Management Accountants

Member of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy

Member of the Australian Defence Force who is:

(a) an officer; or

(b) a non-commissioned officer within the meaning of the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982* with 5 or more years of continuous service; or

(c) a warrant officer within the meaning of that Act

Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, the Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants or the

National Institute of Accountants

Member of:

(a) the Parliament of the Commonwealth; or

(b) the Parliament of a State; or

(c) a Territory legislature; or

(d) a local government authority of a State or Territory

Minister of religion registered under Subdivision A of Division 1 of Part IV of the *Marriage Act 1961* Notary public

Permanent employee of the Australian Postal Corporation with 5 or more years of continuous service who is employed in an office supplying postal services to the public

Permanent employee of:

(a) the Commonwealth or a Commonwealth authority; or

(b) a State or Territory or a State or Territory authority; or

(c) a local government authority;

with 5 or more years of continuous service who is not specified in another item in this list

Person before whom a statutory declaration may be made under the law of the State or Territory in which the declaration is made

Police officer

Registrar, or Deputy Registrar, of a court

Senior Executive Service employee of:

(a) the Commonwealth or a Commonwealth authority; or

(b) a State or Territory or a State or Territory authority Sheriff

Sheriff's officer

Teacher employed on a full-time basis at a school or tertiary education institution

APPENDIX 3
INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT FORM

Name of person	
Description of position the person occupies or will occupy	
The person provided, or gave approval for the Approved Provider to obtain, an original or certificate copy report of his/her police certificate	Yes <i>Evidence recorded</i> No <i>A person who does not provide, or give consent for an Approved Provider to obtain his/her police certificate, is precluded from employment in an aged care service.</i>
Date police certificate requested	
Date of police certificate received	
The police certificate disclosed no convictions	
The police certificate disclosed a conviction requiring further assessment	<i>Ensure there is evidence on file regarding the further assessment that was undertaken and the result of the assessment</i>
The police certificate disclosed convictions of murder or sexual assault; or a conviction of, and sentence to imprisonment for, any other form of assault	<i>The individual is precluded from employment</i>

Name of assessor: _____

Position/Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

