



Police Check Policy

Approved by the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW State Council on 10 July 2013, revised 31 August 2013 and revised on 16 April 2014.

Version Control

Contact names	Role / position	Version number	Date	Review date
Jonathan Campton	Deputy CEO	V2	July 2013	July 2014
Dianne Lucas	Deputy CEO	V3	March 2014	October 2015

CONTENTS

Policy Statement.....	3
Definition.....	3
1. Conducting Police Checks.....	4
1.1 Employees.....	4
1.2 Conference Members.....	4
1.3 Volunteer Members and Associate Members.....	5
1.4 Volunteers.....	6
1.5 Exemptions from Police Checks.....	6
2. Responding to Persons with a Criminal Record.....	7
3. The Role of Police Checks.....	8
4. Continuous Checking.....	9
5. Related Policies.....	9

Policy Statement

The St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW (the Society) will undertake Police checks from 1 May 2014 as part of the engagement for:

- All Employees
- All Conference Members, and Associate and Volunteer Members undertaking medium and high risk roles as well as those Volunteers who are undertaking a medium or high risk role of longer than three months duration after 1 October 2014
- Associate and Volunteer Members undertaking a low risk role are not required to have a police check except at the discretion of the relevant Central Council President or Executive Officer
- Volunteers undertaking a low risk role of any duration, or a medium or high risk role of less than three months duration are not required to have a police check except at the discretion of the relevant Central Council President or Executive Officer. All current Conference, Associate and Volunteers Members, employees and volunteers must immediately inform the Society of any relevant criminal convictions which may impact on their ability to undertake their responsibilities. This is a requirement in the Society's Code of Conduct.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW-Police Check Procedure 2014. The definitions of low, medium and high risk roles are detailed on page 7 below.

Introduction

The St Vincent de Paul Society ("the Society") is committed to ensuring that all members, volunteers and employees engaged by the Society are able to make a positive contribution to the Society's work and thus ensure best possible outcomes for those we serve. The Society has a responsibility to ensure that its members, volunteers and employees will not place the Society at unnecessary risk. Risks could include risk to other personnel, clients, staff and children, risk to the security of the Society's assets and risk to the Society's ability to lawfully carry out its works.

The Society is a respected organisation and must uphold public confidence. It is important that the Society establishes a policy on minimum standards for police checking for members, volunteers and employees.

Definition

Police Check

The Society engages in police checks in the form of the National Criminal History Check.

A national criminal history check is a 'point in time' name-based check of an individual's criminal history record. The process involves CrimTrac searching against a central index of names of persons of interest to police services in order to identify any potential matches.

Where a potential match is identified, the name is referred for evaluation to the respective state or territory police service holding the record.

The relevant police service(s) then releases the criminal history information obtained to CrimTrac to pass on to Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (CCER). Criminal history information is released online subject to relevant Commonwealth / State / Territory spent convictions / non-disclosure legislation and / or information release policies.

1. Conducting Police Checks

1.1 Employees

The Society currently conducts police checks on all prospective employees prior to offering them employment with the Society. This requirement is stated on all position descriptions and job advertisements.

The current cost of a police check for an employee is \$41.00 plus GST. This expense is borne by the State Council, Central Council or Special Work where that person is to be employed.

1.2 Conference Members

The Society refers to Conference Members as all those who carry out unpaid work on behalf of the Society as a member of a Conference according to the definitions contained in The Rule. In this document the term Members refers to Conference Members.

The Society will conduct police checks on all Conference Members aged 18 and over who join the Society on or after 1 May 2014.

Police Checks must be conducted within two months of any conference member commencing work on behalf of the Society. It is expected that in the first two months, most new conference members will only conduct a small number of visits and would be closely supervised by an experienced member.

Persons under the age of 18 who are engaged as conference members are not required to have a police check until they reach the age of 18 but will be asked to sign the Society's Good Character Declaration. Individuals under 18 years of age should not as a general rule be engaged in an unsupervised high risk role with direct access to children or other vulnerable people or to large amounts of money.

The Society acknowledges that best practice is to conduct police checks on all conference members engaged in work for the Society. Conference members work in family situations involving children or young people, handle donations and assistance, and provide direct services to at risk clients. The Society seeks to achieve best practice of police checking all active conference members, however the Society only requires all new conference members who joined the Society on or after 1 May 2014 to complete a Police Check. The Society encourages Central Councils to conduct risk assessments of existing positions and to conduct police checks on existing conference members who are engaged in high risk roles.

The current cost of a police check for a member as a volunteer is \$15.77 plus GST. This expense is borne by the State Council, Central Council or Special Work where that person is to be engaged.

1.3 Volunteer Members and Associate Members

The Society refers to volunteer members and associate members as all those who carry out works on behalf of the Society on an unpaid basis who do not meet the definition of conference member (above).

The Society shall conduct police checks on all volunteer members and associate members undertaking medium and high risk roles aged 18 and over who join the Society on or after 1 May 2014. Police Checks must be conducted prior to any individual commencing work on behalf of the Society. Persons under the age of 18 who are engaged as volunteer members and associate members and are not required to have a police check until they reach the age of 18.

Police Checks must be conducted within two months of all volunteer members and associate members commencing work on behalf of the Society. It is expected that in the first two months, all volunteer members, and associate members would be closely supervised by an experienced member or employee.

The Society acknowledges that best practice is to conduct police checks on all volunteer members and associate members and volunteers engaged in work for the Society. Volunteer members and associate members work in family situations involving children or young people, handle donations and assistance, and provide direct services to at risk clients. The Society encourages Central Councils to conduct risk assessments of existing positions and to conduct police checks on existing members who it considers are engaged in high risk roles.

The current cost of a police check for volunteer members, associate members and volunteers as a volunteer is \$15.77 plus GST from 1 March 2014. This expense is borne by the State Council, Central Council or Special Work where that person is to be engaged.

1.4 Volunteers

The Society refers to volunteers as those who carry out works on behalf of the Society on an unpaid basis who do not meet the definition of conference, associate or volunteer member (above). The term 'volunteer' applies to students, interns, corporates, and others who perform unpaid work for the Society such as through various schemes including 'work for the dole' and 'community service order' schemes.

The Society shall conduct police checks on all volunteers who are undertaking a medium or high risk role for at least three months, who are aged 18 and over who join the Society on or after 1 October 2014. Police Checks must be conducted prior to any individual commencing work on behalf of the Society. Persons under the age of 18 who are engaged as volunteers are not required to have a police check until they reach the age of 18, if they are undertaking a medium or high risk role.

The Society acknowledges that best practice is to conduct police checks on all volunteers engaged in medium and high risk roles. Volunteers may work in family situations involving children or young people, handle donations and assistance, and provide direct services to at risk clients. The Society encourages Central Councils to conduct risk assessments of existing positions and to conduct police checks on existing volunteers who it considers are engaged in high risk roles.

Conducting police checks for volunteers undertaking low risk roles or medium or high risk roles of less than three months duration are at the discretion of the Central Council President or Executive Officer.

1.5 Exemptions from Police Checks

An exemption from Police Checking may be provided for the engagement of Volunteer Members, and Associate Members who work in low risk roles.

An exemption should not be made in situations where there is direct access to clients or direct access to Society funds. Where no police check is required of an associate member, or volunteer member, they must complete a Good Character Declaration.

All exemptions must be approved by the appropriate Executive Officer and recorded in writing.

Catholic Commission for Employment Relations

The Society uses the services of the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (CCER) to carry out police checks on behalf of the Society.

Requests for Police Checks should be submitted to CCER via their online system at a Central Council Level.

Workplace Relations will conduct all police checks for employees.

Risk Assessments

The matrix below is intended to assist in the classification of positions which may be considered low, medium or high risk. The Executive Officer may delegate the assessment of positions but is ultimately responsible for the exemption of positions from Police Checks.

Low Risk Positions	Medium Risk Position	High Risk Position
Person with no access to clients or Society funds.	Centre volunteer	Person running programs for children and young people.
Person who does not have contact with clients or Society funds.	Person with direct but supervised contact with clients.	Person with direct unsupervised contact with vulnerable persons.
Teachers who support a Society activity as part of their duties.	Person with direct contact with small amounts of Society funds	Person with direct contact with large amounts of Society funds

2. Responding to Persons with a Criminal Record

The Society will respond to a criminal record in a manner which reflects the values and charism of the Society. As such a risk assessment will be carried out to determine whether an individual's criminal record puts the organisation at risk prior to making a decision about the engagement of the employee, member or volunteer.

The responsibility for this risk assessment and final decision rests with:

- The relevant Executive Officer for all paid employees and volunteers
- The relevant Council President for all Conference Members, Associate Members and Volunteer Members.

Council Presidents and Executive Officers are encouraged to seek advice of an appropriately trained member of staff in conducting these risk assessments. Executive Officers and Presidents may delegate these risk assessments to suitably qualified and experienced persons.

As a reflection of the Society's values of dignity and respect for each person the Society will endeavour, where appropriate to find suitable engagement for individuals with a criminal record. For example, a prospective volunteer with a

serious driving conviction may not be suitable to drive a vehicle on behalf of the Society but may be able to perform other roles which do not involve driving a vehicle.

It is the relevant Executive Officer's responsibility to ensure appropriate records are kept of the date of clearance for all Police Checks in accordance with the Society's Confidentiality and Privacy Policy and Records Retention Policy.

The Society supports ongoing rehabilitation and will not discriminate because of a criminal record. Criminal record discrimination occurs when someone does not experience equality of opportunity in employment because of their criminal record. This may include being refused a job, dismissed from employment, denied training opportunities or being harassed at work on the basis of their criminal record.

Consideration needs to be given by the Society before a position is approved and advertised as to what (if any) criminal record would prevent an individual from being able to undertake the inherent requirements of the role.

Information which the Society will consider when assessing the relevance of a person's unspent criminal record includes:

- The seriousness of the conviction or offence and its relevance to the job in question;
- Whether there was a finding of guilt but without conviction, which indicates a less serious view of the offence by the courts;
- The age of the applicant when the offences occurred;
- Considering the amount of time that has passed since the criminal activity took place;
- Whether the applicant has a pattern of offences;
- The circumstances in which the offence took place;
- Whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offence was committed;
- Whether the offence has been decriminalised; and
- References from people who know about the offending history.

It is important to consider Spent Conviction schemes both across the Commonwealth and New South Wales as these are the first step in assessing the relevance of criminal records. Spent convictions of specific offences will be released where the check is required for certain purposes regardless of how old the convictions are.

3. The Role of Police Checks

The Society acknowledges the important role that Police Checks play in its ability to safely and effectively carry out its works. Police Checks are part of a suite of measures which aim to ensure that employees, members and

volunteers who work on behalf of the Society are suitable for their roles. Other measures include Pre-employment checks, Interviewing referees, Codes of Conduct, Working with Children Checks, and Good Character Declarations. Together, these measures assist the Society to carry out its works whilst minimising risks and therefore providing better outcomes for those it serves. A Police Check is inadequate by itself as a pre-employment check or a child protection check.

The Child Protection Policy and the Workplace Manual all provide further information on other required screening practices.

4. Continuous Checking

To ensure ongoing suitability, the Society will conduct risk assessments of positions to determine frequency of Police Checks.

Low Risks Positions generally only involve incidental contact with clients, money handling or access to sensitive information. These positions are usually closely supervised. Low Risk Positions may make use of a declaration rather than requiring periodic Police Checks.

Medium Risk Positions may involve contact with clients, money handling or access to sensitive information. They will often have regular contact with clients. Medium Risk Positions should have a further Police Check conducted on a five yearly basis.

High Risk Positions may primarily involve contact with clients including vulnerable clients and children or young people. They may also have significant financial responsibility. High Risk Positions should be subject to Police Checks every two years.

There is an obligation on employees, members and volunteers to inform the Society if their police check status changes adversely. This is one of the requirements of the Code of Conduct.

5. Related Policies

St Vincent de Paul Society, -The Rule, Part 3, 2012

St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW-Police Check Procedure 2014

St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW -Child Protection Policy July 2012

St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW -Workplace Manual, 2008

St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW, Confidentiality and Privacy Policy, August 2010

St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW, Records Retention Policy, June 2010

