

The introduction of the Child Safe Child Friendly Framework in 2021 signals the ongoing commitment of all Girl Guide entities in Australia to doing all that they can to provide Youth Members with a Child Safe Child Friendly community.

Having a consistent approach to recruitment and screening is fundamental to maintaining a Child Safe Child Friendly community. A National Police Check (NPC) for all Ongoing Volunteers, Adult Members and Employees (Adults in Guiding) is integral to screening at a standard now appropriate for contemporary child safe organisations.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

The foundations of the Girl Guides Australia (GGA) Child Safe Child Friendly Policy are the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) as agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2019, the requirements of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The National Principles were developed by COAG in response to the Report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It is important to note that there were no reports made to the Royal Commission involving Girl Guides.

One of the very clear messages from the Royal Commission was that protecting children and promoting their safety is *'everyone's business'* and that organisations have to consciously and systematically create conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm to children, create conditions that increase the likelihood of identifying and reporting harm, and respond appropriately to disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm. The Royal Commission was also critical of organisations that had not adopted a national approach to child safety.

Principle 5 of the National Principles is:

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

One of the indicators of compliance with this Principle is that the organisation verifies applicants' identity, and relevant background/working with children/police checks.

National approach to screening

Girl Guiding in Australia (GGiA) has a uniform approach to the screening of all Adults in Guiding across Australia which complies with the relevant legislation in all states and territories. This is a deliberate policy to promote a uniform approach. All Youth Members are entitled to be kept safe to the same standards no matter where they are in Australia.

GGiA is committed to recruiting in accordance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. Youth Members come into the care of Adults in Guiding in many ways. No matter what their role, all Adults in Guiding have the privilege of belonging to an organisation that places the safety and welfare of Youth Members as a primary consideration.

Recruitment of all Volunteers will be conducted in an accountable and transparent manner outlined in the Procedures and Guidance Notes for the Child Safe Child Friendly Policy. This Guidance Note focusses on the National Police Check (NPC).

A NPC is just one factor that contributes to a Child Safe Child Friendly recruitment process.

Other factors that contribute to the Child Safe Child Friendly community are requirements around Working with Children Check (WWCC) or equivalent, referee checking, supervision and training.

This suite of measures represents best practice for organisations that work with children. Girl Guides not only works with children., it focuses on giving girls and young women a voice and an opportunity to build lifelong friendships and networks. These two core elements alone encourage those in Guiding to speak up for themselves and others, an essential part of creating a child safe culture.

What has changed?

Prior to 2021, a number of State Girl Guide Organisations were already undertaking police checking or had done so in the recent past. This will now be a consistent requirement across all of Australia.

How is a NPC different to a WWCC or its equivalent?

Currently, there is a different WWCC (or equivalent) in every state and territory in Australia. There is no consistency in the name of the check, nor is there consistency in the standards applied. The inconsistency in the standard of the outcomes of these different WWCCs results from a number of differences in the checking process including the:

- definition of sexual assault applied
- sources of information considered in the checking process
- different offences that provide an absolute bar to issuing a clear WWCC
- different criteria for when a WWCC or equivalent is required
- different exemptions from the requirement to hold a WWCC
- process being undertaken by different 'government' entities
- transparency of the risk assessment process to enable an accurate comparison

None of the current WWCC processes across Australia screen out for fraud offences. Drink driving and other substance misuse offences are risk assessed by the agency. These are both matters that may be inconsistent with a person engaging with Girl Guides. They may impact both the safety of Youth Members directly and the maintenance of a Child Safe Child Friendly community. Generally, matters such as parking fines and the occasional speeding or other minor traffic offence will not be considered as a bar from engagement with Girl Guides unless they are part of an overall pattern of disregard for the law (and therefore contrary to the GGA Code of Conduct).

I have lived overseas for more than six months since I turned 18 – how do I satisfy the NPC requirement?

As the NPC only captures offences under Australian law, GGIA has made accommodations to manage risk where a person has not always lived in Australia as an adult. The requirements for criminal history screening have been designed to address the higher risk posed by the circumstances of a person not being subject to the record keeping provided for by the criminal justice system in Australia. The NPC requirement can be satisfied by a person who has lived overseas for more than six months since they turned 18 in the following ways:

- If the applicant has been a member of a WAGGGS organisation in the two years immediately prior to making an application in Australia they can provide a reference from their supervisor in that organisation and a statutory declaration as to their criminal history or
- If an applicant has been in Australia for over 20 years as an adult, then they can provide a statutory declaration as to their criminal history in addition to the NPC or
- Where neither of these circumstances apply an International Police Check is required.

There is a *Statutory Declaration - Criminal History Declaration* available on *Guide Lines*. Please refer to *Element 3 - Guiding Resources*.

How will Girl Guides store my NPC?

GGIA will keep all NPC records securely in accordance with the GGA Privacy Policy.

How will Girl Guides consider my NPC?

Where there is no disclosable outcome on the NPC, it is just kept as a record that Girl Guides has complied with its Child Safe Child Friendly Policy.

A NPC with disclosable outcomes does not mean engagement as an Adult in Guiding will be denied. Rather, the outcome is considered as to whether or not it is consistent with the Mission, GGA Code of Conduct and/or policies and procedures of WAGGGS, GGA and GGIA.

NPCs will be reviewed in accordance with the internal policy of GGA or the relevant SGGO (depending on which organisation is processing the application for membership).

Reference should be made to the provisions of Child Safe Child Friendly Procedure Element 2 – Clause 15 and Element 3 – Clause 8 which is found on *Guide Lines*.

Membership of, volunteering and employment with Girl Guiding is a privilege and not a right. The Child Safe Child Friendly Framework was designed to provide the best practice for child safety and wellbeing. Having suitable people as Adults in Guiding plays an important role in the maintenance of a Child Safe Child Friendly community. The NPC is an integral part to the recruitment and screening process that is fundamental to the keeping Girl Guides safe.